GRIEF WORLDS

A STUDY OF EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Matthew Ratcliffe

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A Study of Emotional Experience

Matthew Ratcliffe

The MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England

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The MIT Press would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers who provided comments on drafts of this book. The generous work of academic experts is essential for establishing the authority and quality of our publications. We acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of these otherwise uncredited readers.

This book was set in Stone Serif and Stone Sans by Westchester Publishing Services.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ratcliffe, Matthew, 1973– author.
Title: Grief worlds : a study of emotional experience / Matthew Ratcliffe.
Description: Cambridge, Massachusetts : The MIT Press, [2022] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022004533 (print) | LCCN 2022004534 (ebook) | ISBN 9780262544801 (paperback) | ISBN 9780262372602 (epub) | ISBN 9780262372619 (pdf)
Subjects: LCSH: Grief. | Bereavement.
Classification: LCC BF575.G7 R38 2023 (print) | LCC BF575.G7 (ebook) | DDC 152.4—dc23/eng/20220621
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022004533
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022004534

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Acknowledgments

This book was written as part of the four-year research project "Grief: A Study of Human Emotional Experience" (2020–2023). I am very grateful to the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding this project (grant reference: AH/T000066/1). I would like to thank my project colleagues, Louise Richardson, Becky Millar, Emily Hughes, and Ellie Byrne, for all their helpful feedback, encouragement, and advice. I am also grateful to several other colleagues at the University of York, who have supported our research on grief in one or another way. They include Keith Allen, Bryony Beresford, James Clarke, the late David Efird, Julia Hackett, Julie Kay, Paul Noordhof, Ruth Penfold-Mounce, Julie Rugg, Tom Stoneham, Alan Thomas, and Lillian Wilde. As part of the project, we undertook a qualitative survey of grief experiences, to which 265 people responded. I would like to thank all of them for taking the time to complete the survey, giving our questions such careful thought, and sharing their experiences with us. Their testimonies were immensely informative, and I draw on them throughout this book. I am also grateful to the charity Cruse Bereavement Care for advising us on the design of the survey and assisting with its dissemination.

I was steered toward the topic of grief from several directions. Work I had done on depression, trauma, the sense of time, interpersonal experience, hallucination, emotional feeling, and emotion regulation all pointed this way. My thinking has been helped along by conversations and email exchanges with many people, including Thomas Attig, Anna Bortolan, Matthew Broome, Luke Brunning, Havi Carel, Michael Cholbi, Jonathan Cole, Giovanna Colombetti, Rachel Cooper, Maike Cram, Douglas Davies, Jody Day, Dorothea Debus, Luna Dolezal, Christoph Durt, Tom Froese, Thomas Fuchs, Rick Furtak, Shaun Gallagher, Richard Gipps, the late Peter Goldie,

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Kathleen Higgins, Line Ryberg Ingerslev, Ian Kidd, Dennis Klass, Laurence Kirmayer, Alan Køster, Joel Krueger, Martin Kusch, Andy Langford, Oliver Lukitsch, Abigail Mack, Kym Maclaren, Alice Malpass, Berislav Marušić, Donna Orange, Graham Parkes, Jennifer Radden, John Rhodes, Juliet Rosenfeld, Louis Sass, Philipp Schmidt, Tasia Scrutton, Jan Slaby, Benedict Smith, Edith Steffen, Achim Stephan, Galen Strawson, Fredrik Svenaeus, Jason Throop, Dylan Trigg, Mark Wynn, and Dan Zahavi. I am also grateful to four anonymous referees who provided informative and encouraging feedback on my book proposal and to two referees who later commented on the full manuscript and made some really helpful suggestions. Philip Laughlin at the MIT Press has been great to work with, and I thank him for his support and encouragement.

Material that found its way into this book was presented at events hosted by the Association for the Advancement of Philosophy and Psychiatry in New York, the Royal Institute of Philosophy in London, the Dutch Foundation for Psychiatry and Philosophy in Amsterdam, UCLA, University College Dublin, PhenoLab, and the Universities of Aalborg, Bristol, Fordham, Guelph, Heidelberg, Jyväskylä, Vienna, and York. I thank all of these audiences for insightful comments and suggestions.

This book incorporates, in revised form, material from previously published articles and chapters:

"Sensed Presence without Sensory Qualities: A Phenomenological Study of Bereavement Hallucinations." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 20 (2021): 601–616.

"Philosophical Empathy (in the Style of Merleau-Ponty)." *Continental Philosophy Review* 54 (2021): 219–235.

"Towards a Phenomenology of Grief: Insights from Merleau-Ponty." *European Journal of Philosophy* 28 (2020): 657–669.

"Emotional Intentionality." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 85 (2019): 251–269.

"Grief and Phantom Limbs: A Phenomenological Comparison." *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 17 (2019): 77–96.

"The Phenomenological Clarification of Grief and Its Relevance for Psychiatry." In *Oxford Handbook of Phenomenological Psychopathology*, edited by G. Stanghellini et al., 538–551. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

"Grief and the Unity of Emotion." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 41 (2017): 154–174.

Chapter 5 is adapted from "Sensed Presence without Sensory Qualities," sections 3.3 and 3.4 from "Grief and Phantom Limbs," and section 8.2 from

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"The Phenomenological Clarification of Grief." Smaller selections of substantially revised material from the other pieces appear at various points. Where permission to reproduce material was required, I am grateful to the publishers for granting it.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Beth, and our children, Thomas and Samuel. I wrote this book while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it was not an easy time for the three of them, they were very understanding and supportive. I am also grateful to Beth for reading draft chapters and making many helpful suggestions.

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1 Introduction

All of us who care for others and live long enough will experience grief during our lives. However, despite grief's ubiquity, what it is to *experience* grief remains poorly understood. So, in this book, I set out to investigate the phenomenology of grief: what do experiences of grief consist of, how are they structured, and what can they tell us about the nature of human experience more generally? Grief experiences differ from one another in many ways and are influenced by various factors, including age, gender, social background, culture, earlier life events, one's relationship with the deceased, the circumstances of the death, other aspects of one's situation at the time of the death, and level of social support. Although I acknowledge the diversity of grief throughout, my aim is to identify features that are common to most or even all experiences of grief.

One might wonder why grief is a suitable topic for a specifically *philosophical* enquiry. I identify three main reasons. First of all, by studying grief in detail, we can learn a great deal about the nature of human emotional experience, about what emotions are and what they do. Second, a consideration of grief also casts light on a wider range of philosophical issues concerning the nature of human experience. The third, and principal, motivation for this study is that the experience of grief is inherently puzzling. Many of those who experience grief struggle to comprehend and articulate it. As I will show, the relevant aspects of grief lend themselves to philosophical and, more specifically, *phenomenological* investigation.

A consistent theme in first-person accounts of bereavement is that grief involves a profound alteration in the experience of self, world, and other people, of a kind that is hard to make sense of or convey to others who have not themselves had such an experience. One can know that someone

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has died but somehow not believe it, experience that person as absent and yet somehow present, and be confronted with the dissolution of a familiar world that one previously took for granted. Another prominent theme in first-person accounts is finding oneself curiously disconnected from other people. *Their* world carries on in the usual ways, but one is adrift from it, cast out into a strange and often isolated realm. Descriptions such as the following are offered frequently, especially during the early stages of grief:

> I feel as though I no longer belong in the world. Everything continues to happen as before, people carry on enjoying themselves, going out, being with friends, and I am looking through a window at them like some urchin from a Dickens novel. (#62)

> The surrounding world gets on with life while mine stops, implodes and falls apart. (#87)

> You are in a grief bubble looking out at normality. (#104)

> Everything feels different looking at it from the perspective of being on my own, and it feels somehow wrong that everything keeps going while my own world has fallen apart. (#123)

What is it to experience oneself as estranged from a shared world in this manner, to have one's own world fall to pieces, to know full well that something has happened while at the same time finding it somehow impossible, for everything to feel wrong? These are among the questions to be addressed here.

The testimonies quoted above were acquired through an online survey of grief experiences, which I designed and conducted with colleagues in 2020–2021 as part of the project "Grief: A Study of Human Emotional Experience." Participants were invited to provide open-ended, free-text responses to twenty-one questions concerning the experience of grief. We received 265 responses in total, which I will draw on throughout the book. In the chapters that follow, all numbered quotations were obtained via this study. (Further information concerning the study design, questions asked, and responses quoted here is provided in the appendix.) In drawing on these testimonies, my aim is not so much to provide evidence for general claims that I make about the phenomenology of grief. Rather, I seek to show how first-person descriptions of grief can raise philosophical issues and guide philosophical enquiry, to illustrate certain philosophical points that I make, to identify some of the ways in which people articulate specific aspects of grief, and to indicate the kinds of first-person accounts to which my analyses are intended to apply. At no

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point do I take this body of testimony to reflect the full diversity of how grief is experienced and described.[1]

In reflecting on these survey responses and on a range of other first-person accounts, I will show how philosophical—and more specifically phenomenological—enquiry can enhance our understanding of grief experiences. In addition, I will show how we can obtain philosophical insights with much wider applicability by studying grief. These concern the structure of human emotion, the sense of possibility, what it is to experience someone *as* a person, the relationships between linguistic thought and emotion, and various ways in which the structure of human experience depends on relations with other people. I will also identify some similarities between the experience of grief and phenomenological enquiry itself, with implications for how we conceive of phenomenological research and its limitations.

I am writing primarily for an audience of academic philosophers, including phenomenologists and philosophers of mind, psychology, and psychiatry. Some will have a particular interest in grief, while others will be interested in larger philosophical issues that arise in connection with grief. However, my discussion will also be of relevance to a range of other researchers and practitioners, whose work concerns grief or emotion more generally. In addition, it is my hope that this material will help people to better understand their own experiences of grief. After all, grief is often said to be bewildering, difficult both to comprehend oneself and to communicate to others:

> There are no words in the English language to actually explain how the grief feels or changes. (#87)

> It's hard to put into words how devastating it feels and how alone and empty. Words don't explain the feeling. You're torn apart totally. (#45)

> The intensity of loss is so hard to describe—I'm not sure that I can begin to do it justice. (#69)

> I find everything about grief difficult to put into words. (#125)

> All of it is baffling. (#159)

Before proceeding further, I should make clear how the term "grief" is understood in what follows. By "grief," I mean an emotional response to loss (which, as we will see, also involves recognizing, responding to, and adapting to loss). I am concerned specifically with the *experience* of grief and

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will sometimes employ the term "grief" as a synonym for this. However, that is not to suggest that grief per se is exhausted by its phenomenology. Although one might further distinguish passively experiencing grief from actively *grieving*, I regard the difference as one of emphasis. There is a singular phenomenon involving a combination of activity and passivity, which can be described in both ways.

Grief is thus distinct from having suffered a bereavement. While bereavement involves losing someone we care about, grief is a matter of responding emotionally to what has happened. A further distinction can be drawn between grief and mourning. Grief concerns an individual's emotional experience, whereas mourning (at least as sometimes conceived of) involves acting according to socially and culturally prescribed norms surrounding bereavement.[2] Hence, there will be instances of grieving without mourning and mourning without grieving. Nevertheless, as the discussion progresses, we will see that a clean distinction does not apply to the majority of cases, given that the unfolding of emotional experience is inextricable from engagement with the surrounding social and cultural environment.

Throughout the book, I focus primarily on experiences of loss involving the death of a person, but much of what I will say about grief in the context of bereavement also applies to other forms of loss. The term "grief" is often employed to refer to experiences of loss more generally. For instance, someone might be said to grieve over the loss of a home or a job. I have no wish to restrict how we use the term "grief." Indeed, I will suggest that there are important structural similarities between experiences of bereavement and other forms of loss. Broader uses of the term can therefore succeed in identifying a distinctive form of experience, as opposed to a disparate assortment of experiences (Varga and Gallagher 2020; Richardson et al. 2021).[3] Nevertheless, I also want to emphasize something that is distinctive about *personal* forms of loss and, in particular, bereavement. For that reason, other than where I am explicitly addressing non-bereavement losses, I employ the term "grief" in a more specific way, to refer to emotional experiences stemming from bereavement.[4]

Experiences of grief vary considerably, depending—in part—on the nature of one's relationship with the deceased. Some of my observations and claims will apply more naturally to certain kinds of bereavements than others, most often to the loss of a partner. There is the concern that what applies in this case may not apply in the same way to bereavements in general. Furthermore,

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the circumstances in which people experience grief differ in all sorts of other important ways as well. So, we should be careful not to overgeneralize. Nevertheless, my overall aim is to develop a unified phenomenological approach toward grief, focusing on aspects of grief that are puzzling (to philosophers and to people more generally) and open to phenomenological investigation. I seek to identify broad types of phenomenological change that are common to most or even all instances of grief, while at the same time acknowledging and accommodating grief's diversity (although the focus throughout is on "deeper" or more "profound" forms of grief, where phenomenological changes are especially pronounced). Thus, even where I provide examples or make points that are representative of only certain bereavements, I do so in the course of developing phenomenological analyses that are broader in scope. The discussion is organized around two principal themes. Chapters 2–4 address how grief affects one's experience of and relationship with the *world* as a whole, with an emphasis on grief's dynamic and temporally extended structure. The remainder of the book focuses on the distinctively *interpersonal* character of grief—how those who are grieving relate to the living and the dead. As we will see, both aspects of grief encompass considerable variety.

I started thinking about the temporal structure of grief after some long conversations with the philosopher Peter Goldie that took place—if I recall correctly—in late 2010 or early 2011. At the time, Peter and I had both become interested in grief, but for different reasons. I was working on the phenomenology of depression and wondering how grief might resemble and differ from depression. Peter's interest lay in challenging a widespread tendency to conceive of emotions as brief episodes. His article on the topic, "Grief: A Narrative Account," had either just been published or was shortly to appear. In addition, he had recently completed a book manuscript, *The Mess Inside* (Goldie 2011, 2012).

Philosophical discussions of emotion tend to focus on short-lived responses to entities, situations, events, or facts. Once this emphasis on emotional *episodes* is established, attention then turns to what those episodes consist of, what roles they play, when they are appropriate or justified, how they relate to their objects, how many types of episodes there are, what the appropriate criteria are for distinguishing between types, and so forth. For instance, Jesse Prinz (2004, 3) begins his discussion by emphasizing "emotion episodes" and their various "components." The tendency is even more

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pronounced in certain scientific circles. For example, the psychologist Klaus Scherer (2005, 697) defines an emotion "*as an episode of interrelated, synchronized changes*" that respond to "*the evaluation of an external or internal stimulus event as relevant to major concerns of the organism.*" He adds that these changes involve a number of different organismic subsystems and that the burden all of this places on the organism means that emotions can be sustained only for very short periods of time:

> Given the importance of the eliciting event, which disrupts the flow of behavior, all or most of the subsystems of the organism must contribute to response preparation. The resulting massive mobilization of resources must be coordinated, a process which can be described as *response synchronization*. . . . Their duration must be relatively short in order not to tax the resources of the organism and to allow behavioral flexibility. (Scherer 2005, 701–702)

Grief, as Peter recognized, is more plausibly construed as a temporally extended process. But what kind of process is it, what constituents does it have, and what makes it a unified whole rather than just an assortment of temporally scattered episodes? As well as answering such questions, Peter wanted to further investigate how things would look if we stopped conceiving of human emotions primarily as short-lived episodes and instead adopted grief as an exemplar for thinking about emotions in general. However, he died in October 2011. One of the things I try to do in this book is follow that path and find out where it leads. I am sure Peter would not have endorsed everything that I say here. Even so, while I have been thinking and writing about grief, he has remained a consistent philosophical presence.

In maintaining that grief is a *process* of some kind, I do not endorse the more specific view that it follows a standard trajectory in "normal" or "typical" cases. We might think of the well-known five-stage model of grief, set out by Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2005), according to which grief involves denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and, finally, acceptance. That model is often dismissed by critics, largely because grief experiences seldom follow such a neat sequence of steps. In fact, however, Kübler-Ross and Kessler do not endorse anything so rigid. As they write, these stages "were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages" and there is no "typical response to loss" (Kübler-Ross and Kessler 2005, 7). Thus, although thinking in terms of stages is intended to help us conceptualize grief, the hypothesized stages do not comprise a normal or predictable temporal pattern. It would be better to think of the model in terms of its utility for one

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or another theoretical or practical purpose than as something to be deemed straightforwardly true or false. Nevertheless, it is not a conceptualization that I seek to promote here.[5] Instead of attempting to determine whether various phenomenological changes fall into stages, I am interested in *what* those changes consist of, in better understanding their nature. This inevitably involves considering how they relate to one another as well, at particular times and also over time, but not to the extent of individuating and ordering discrete stages of grief.

To address what a grief process consists of and how it amounts to a cohesive whole, I turn first to the phenomenological *world* of grief. Those who are grieving often report having lost something that they previously took for granted, something fundamental to their lives. For example, here is how Jacqueline Dooley (2019) describes the impact of her daughter's death on her relationship with the world as a whole:

> Her death pulled the rug out from under my life. It shattered my understanding of the presumed natural order of things. It left me with the dilemma of trying to make my way in a world that made absolutely no sense to me.

What is it to have one's understanding "shattered" in this way? What is it to be faced with a "world" that no longer "makes sense"? One important point to acknowledge is that the phenomenological effects of bereavement are nonlocalized. We might think of grief as an experience that is elicited by and directed at something quite specific: the event of a death, a person's being dead, or one's never seeing that person again. It can therefore be contrasted with diffuse feelings or moods that lack a specific intentional object. However, although grief is surely concerned with and somehow directed at the death of a particular person, it also has a more enveloping structure. In his famous memoir, *A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis describes this as follows:

> At first I was very afraid of going to places where H. and I had been happy—our favourite pub, our favourite wood. But I decided to do it at once—like sending a pilot up again as soon as possible after he's had a crash. Unexpectedly, it makes no difference. Her absence is no more emphatic in those places than anywhere else. It's not local at all. I suppose that if one were forbidden all salt one wouldn't notice it much more in any one food than in another. Eating in general would be different, every day, at every meal. It is like that. The act of living is different all through. Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything. (1961/1966, 11–12)

Diffuse experiences of absence and loss are not uniform and unchanging; they are equivocal, dynamic, and often riddled with tensions. Especially in

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the early stages of grief, one might know full well that someone has died and endorse the proposition "Person A is dead" with unwavering confidence. Yet there remains another sense in which one does believe it at all: this can't be happening; it's not right; it's impossible; it doesn't make sense; it's not real; she will come back. In seeking to understand the nature of this and other, closely related experiences, I suggest that it is helpful to locate them within the process structure of grief. Localized and nonlocalized experiences of tension, conflict, negation, lack, absence, unreality, and being cut off from a shared world are integral to a longer-term process of recognizing and responding to someone's death.

But why can recognition of what has happened not occur in an instant? As we will see, fully comprehending that a person one cares about deeply has died is not merely a matter of confidently endorsing the appropriate propositions. It also involves coming to reconcile the structure of one's experiential world with an explicit acknowledgment of loss. A world that operated as a presupposed backdrop to one's experiences, thoughts, and activities may have come to depend on that person in all manner of ways. Established projects, habits, commitments, and pastimes that shape how the surrounding world is experienced all presuppose the person, in ways that render them unsustainable or even unintelligible in the face of loss. For instance, where goal-directed projects are built around doing something *for that person* or *for us*, associated activities cease to make sense. However, an experiential world is not something that can be revised instantaneously; it often takes a great deal of time. It is in this, I will suggest, that the *unity* of grief is to be found. A grief process is unified to the extent that the life disturbance it negotiates is unified. And a life disturbance is unified to the extent that a human life involves patterns of implication that bind together various values, projects, commitments, habits, and relationships.

By studying the world of grief, we learn important lessons about the phenomenology of emotion more generally. It is commonplace for philosophers to distinguish emotions from moods, on the basis that (a) emotions have specific objects, while moods have either very general objects or no objects at all, and (b) emotions are short-lived episodes, whereas moods tend to last for longer periods. For example, being scared of the barking dog differs in both respects from being in a bad mood about everything all day. However, by conceiving of grief as a unified emotional experience and also a longer-term process, we acknowledge a third option: being temporally extended

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but changeable. Importantly, grief also calls into question the entrenched distinction between specifically directed emotions and more diffuse affective experiences. In so doing, it reveals something that is central to the structure of emotional intentionality, although seldom acknowledged. Grief is specifically directed, but it also envelops how we experience the world as a whole. I will propose that this "two-sided" structure is what distinguishes characteristically *emotional* experience (at least, those forms of emotional experience that consist of episodes or longer-term processes) from other types of intentionality.[6] Phenomenologically speaking, what happens is that we encounter or receive news of an event or situation against the backdrop of a preestablished experiential world. At the same time, we *recognize*—in a way that needs to be spelled out carefully—that this same event or situation has potential or actual implications for the world within which it occurs. In the case of grief, although something is encountered *in* a world, it also undermines that world and is experienced *as* undermining it. This tension is key to understanding experiences of unreality, disconnection, disbelief, and the like.

One way of putting it is to say that the person who has died is no longer an entity within one's world but remains as a condition of intelligibility for that same world. So, although the person's irrevocable absence from the world might be explicitly acknowledged, things still look much as they did when he was alive, in ways that are inconsistent with his absence. I will show how the relevant aspect of experience can be further analyzed in terms of the various *significant possibilities* that we experience as integral to entities, events, and situations—the ways in which things *matter* to us. Whether something appears relevant or irrelevant, pressing or unimportant, safe or threatening, and so forth is partly a reflection of one's idiosyncratic life structure—one's values, projects, pastimes, commitments, habits, and expectations. And that structure can come to depend in various ways on a relationship with a particular person. We do not experience our surroundings perceptually and only afterward assign one or another type and degree of significance to what we experience. More often, how things matter is experienced as integral to them: they *appear* immediately relevant, urgent, threatening, or enticing. It follows that, when someone dies, we can be confronted by the fact of the death and, at the same time, by the persistence of a world that continues to include that person and our relationship with them.

To appreciate the phenomenological structure of grief, and of human emotion more generally, it is essential to acknowledge the dynamic relationship

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between these two "sides" of experience and how it unfolds over time. However, this is something that has been eclipsed by the tendency to take a short-lived experience with a clearly delineated intentional object as an exemplar for thinking about emotion.[7] Many such episodes involve actual or potential events that affect one's life structure only in superficial and fleeting ways, as when one feels angry with a rude shop assistant or happy to find that a café is open. Given this, the world side of the experience is not so conspicuous. In other instances, the potential or actual impact on one's world is more profound, as when someone is said to be sad about losing a job to which they were committed or worried about receiving a diagnosis of serious illness. Nevertheless, there remains a tendency to focus on localized experiential contents and neglect how they relate to the world within which they arise.

I will argue that the two-sided structure of emotional experience is not captured by established distinctions, such as that between "cognition" and "affect" or "thought" and "feeling." The same aspects of experience are describable in terms of their bodily phenomenology and in terms of judgment or thought. For instance, in emphasizing the dynamism of grief, one of the things we discover is that many "feelings" have an anticipatory structure. But this same structure is equally integral to the phenomenology of linguistic thought, rendering straightforward contrasts between feeling and thought unhelpful here. The fact that emotional experience does not respect such distinctions is one reason why it can be difficult to comprehend and articulate. Another reason is that it can involve the disruption of something more usually presupposed by linguistic thought, an aspect of experience that is not ordinarily an object of reflection at all but a backdrop against which reflection takes place.

The temporal organization of grief is to be conceived of in terms of its two-sidedness and vice versa. I will suggest that grief incorporates (but is not exhausted by) the task of reconciling the two sides, by coming to inhabit a world consistent with the death. This involves experiencing and navigating numerous conflicts between a world that was and the reality of one's current situation. There are also closely related tensions between the world of others, which carries on in a manner that is largely oblivious to what has happened, and one's own world, which has come to an end. Another important aspect of the experience, to be distinguished from both of these tensions, is a peculiar sense of indeterminacy and of lacking direction. This

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is not simply a matter of finding oneself in one structured world, in contrast to another such world. Rather, the old world is experienced as gone and nothing has replaced it yet. Consequently, structures that would ordinarily render one's actions appropriate to a situation and also elicit certain actions are curiously lacking. This extends to the phenomenology of thought as well. It is not merely a case of not *knowing* what to do, what to say, or what to think. Norms that might otherwise have specified how to proceed or at least provided guidance are absent, amounting to an experience of being lost. This can even envelop linguistic meaning, adding to the challenge of comprehending and articulating one's grief.

So far, I have only introduced the first of my two principal themes: the world of grief and its relationship to grief's process structure. This might suffice to account for some experiences of loss, but it does not serve to identify what is distinctive about *personal* loss. Granted, the integrity of one's world may come to depend on a particular person, but it could equally depend on a job, a home, or certain bodily abilities. Nevertheless, having come to appreciate the two-sided, dynamic structure of grief, we are better equipped to address the second theme of this book: the *interpersonal* phenomenology of grief. The impact of bereavement demonstrates the extent to which the structure of a human life can come to depend on relationships with particular people. As Thomas Attig (2011, xlvi) writes, "Our selves are by their nature social, permeable, and interdependent. This makes us vulnerable to the loss of wholeness and to the pain and anguish which bereavement entails." This interdependence is partly a matter of how our projects, habitual activities, and pastimes implicate other people. But it is important to tease this apart from something quite different, something highly elusive that is equally central to how we experience and think about the world and ourselves: the sense of connection with a particular person.

In the book *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes describes his repeated attempts to "recognize" his mother, who had recently died, in numerous photographs of her. Although he could differentiate her from other people easily enough, he could not "find" her. Eventually, Barthes discovers his mother not in an accurate image of her features but in a photograph of her as a child that somehow captures her, enabling him to "discover" her. What he sees in the photograph is her "kindness," consisting in an overarching "air" that cannot be reduced to any combination of more specific details (Barthes 1980/2000, 66–109). What is this "air"? I will propose that

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it consists in a sense of relational possibilities involving a particular person, an openness to being affected by her in a unique way. Essential to the relevant experience is a receptivity to novelty and spontaneity, to having one's own world shaped by that person in ways that cannot be fully anticipated. Being presented with an accurate image or description sometimes conflicts with this openness, replacing it with something determinate and inflexible that fails to convey *who* someone was.

Even after a person has died, we can continue to be affected in ways that add up to a sense of *that person* or even to an experience of *being with* them. Furthermore, we can seek to rekindle, retain, and transform this sense of connection. Drawing on the "continuing bonds" literature, I will show how such experiences—and also their absence—contribute to the phenomenology of grief in important ways. As with other aspects of grief, it is a mistake to think of them in terms of localized, determinate experiential contents. Instead, the sense of being with a particular person is often manifested primarily in ways of experiencing and engaging with the surrounding world. For example, going for a walk *with* someone may involve relating to our surroundings and finding things significant in ways that differ from when we are walking alone or with other people. Such experiences, I will suggest, consist in a dynamic sense of possibilities, something that is inseparable from being affected in a particular way by a particular person. This is importantly different from the manner in which projects, habits, and pastimes continue to presuppose a person. And it is something that characterizes our relations with the dead, as well as the living.

In acknowledging this aspect of interpersonal experience, we come to appreciate how experiences, thoughts, and activities are shaped and also *regulated* by relations with other people, both the living and the dead. While accepting that someone is irrevocably absent from our world, we might still experience that person's "air." With this, the person continues to affect how we experience the world, in ways that contribute to our engagement with loss. The novelist Julian Barnes (2013, 103) thus writes, "The paradox of grief: if I have survived what is now four years of her absence, it is because I have had four years of her presence." Something that distinguishes bereavement from most other experiences of loss is that it frequently involves losing someone who would otherwise have shaped and regulated one's response to loss.[8] Nevertheless, the person who has died may continue to play that role, at least to some extent. So again, a particular person is both an entity

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within one's world and at the same time a condition for that world. But this diffuse, dynamic sense of what it is to be with a particular person is importantly different from experiencing the world through the lens of specific projects, pastimes, and values that continue to implicate the deceased.

I will show how this distinction helps us to identify and better understand some of the ways in which our relations with other people, both the living and the dead, contribute to emotion regulation in grief, shaping how experiences of grief unfold over time. The temporal structure of grief, I will suggest, is not attributable solely to internal psychological processes but also to processes that are interpersonally and socially distributed. Grief's course is phenomenologically inseparable from interactions with particular individuals and with the social world as a whole, a point that also applies to our emotional lives more generally. To illustrate how grief processes are interpersonally and socially regulated, I will reflect on some first-person accounts of grief during the COVID-19 pandemic. These identify a number of different ways in which grief experiences and their course over time were affected by social restrictions imposed during the pandemic. In so doing, they illustrate how the structure of human emotional experience is inseparable from interpersonal relations, which themselves arise against the backdrop of an organized social world. This is not at all evident when we attend instead to abstract examples of fleeting emotions, along the lines of "B is happy about *p*."

It follows from all of this that the trajectory of grief is fragile. Furthermore, it is plausible to maintain that differences between "typical" and "pathological" forms of grief are partly—perhaps largely—attributable to interpersonal and social factors. By this, I do not mean simply that features taken to be indicative of pathology are sometimes *caused* by interpersonal and social situations. Instead, I will argue for the stronger claim that these features are partly *constituted* by certain ways of relating to other people and to the wider social world.

Much of my discussion in this book is not explicitly situated within the phenomenological tradition of philosophy. Nevertheless, in line with a substantial body of work in that tradition, I emphasize the need to acknowledge an experiential world that is more usually presupposed and overlooked. I further suggest that grief can bring to light aspects of experience that are not readily available to explicit reflection, in a manner resembling phenomenological enquiry itself. Especially relevant to my discussion is the work

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of French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Although he had little to say about grief specifically, the topic resonates with his broader thinking in several ways. For instance, the indeterminacy that is magnified in grief corresponds to a central theme in his various writings. Furthermore, the experience of grief turns out to be structurally similar to Merleau-Ponty's own method, which involves ways of attending to phenomenological disturbances in order to make explicit and analyze the underlying structure of experience. The parallels even extend to the operation of philosophical language and how it can differ from using words within the context of a stable, taken-for-granted world.

The chapters that follow pursue these lines of thought in much the same order as they are set out here. Chapters 2–4 address what we might call the *self-oriented* aspects of grief, how bereavement affects *one's own* experiential world. Many of my points in these chapters are not specific to bereavement and apply equally to other forms of loss. Chapter 2 elaborates on the two-sidedness of grief, its process structure, the tensions between propositional acceptance of loss and a world that continues to presuppose the deceased, and what it is that unifies an experience of grief. Chapter 3 then develops a bodily perspective on these aspects of experience, focusing on the phenomenology of emotional *feeling*. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, I investigate, in depth, the structural similarities and differences between experiences of grief and adjusting to the loss of a limb. On the basis of this, I conclude that other people can contribute both to a sense of one's abilities and to how the surrounding world is experienced, in ways that are structurally similar to and inseparable from the contributions made by one's own bodily capacities. The chapter also considers the *pain* of grief, proposing that we think of this in terms of an injury to the self. In chapter 4, I adopt what might seem to be a more *cognitive* perspective, in turning to the themes of indeterminacy and linguistic experience. However, I show how feeling and linguistic thought share a common anticipatory structure. This is something that cannot be captured in terms of a distinction between cognition and affect. Again, Merleau-Ponty's work proves helpful here, especially the contrast between what he calls "language" and "speech."

The emphasis of chapters 5–8 is on the distinctively *personal* phenomenology of grief, including how grief is concerned with what has happened to someone else, rather than just one's own world. Chapter 5 considers so-called bereavement hallucinations and develops an account of what it is to

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experience the *presence* of the deceased. This, I suggest, is a matter of being affected in ways that are uniquely associated with a particular person, something that involves a dynamic experience of possibilities. Chapter 6 turns from perceptual experiences to interpersonal relations. I begin by discussing "continuing bonds" approaches, according to which people who experience bereavements tend to renegotiate their relationships with the deceased, rather than ultimately "letting go" or "moving on." I argue that the contrast is not so clear as it might seem. This sets the scene for a discussion of what grief is *about*, what its *object* is. I argue that it is a mistake to think of personal loss in terms of the subtraction of something concrete from one's world. Instead, the experience of loss consists primarily in a sense of certain possibilities having been extinguished: one's own, those of the deceased, and others that were shared. The object of grief is not simply a death, the fact that someone is dead, or the loss of a valued relationship. It is a *loss of life possibilities*, something that is compatible with other, more concrete descriptions of grief's object.

Chapter 7 introduces the topic of emotion regulation and focuses specifically on how grief is shaped by relations with other people, both the living and the dead. Grief, I suggest, is regulated by processes that are interpersonally and socially distributed. Chapter 8 builds on this, to address the themes of grief's appropriateness and how we are to distinguish typical or healthy grief from psychopathology. The forms of experience associated with labels such as "complicated grief," "prolonged grief disorder," and "disenfranchised grief" are, I suggest, best understood through a perspective that emphasizes the process structure of grief, along with its dependence on interactions with particular individuals and a wider social world.

Finally, chapter 9 steps back to reflect on some structural similarities between grief and phenomenological enquiry, by returning to Merleau-Ponty. The convergence between what phenomenology sets out to study and what is glimpsed through profound grief leads me to identify a limit to phenomenological thought, a point where we depart from the familiar to such an extent that the phenomenological prerequisites for linguistic thought are lost.

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2 The Structure of Grief

To appreciate the phenomenology of grief, we need to step back from a certain way of thinking about emotional experience. As noted in chapter 1, there is a widespread tendency in philosophy and other disciplines to construe emotions as brief episodes with specific objects, such as being afraid of the dog or happy that it is a sunny morning. Emotional experiences like these are contrasted with moods, which endure for longer periods and have either very general objects or no objects at all. But grief does not fit into either category. First of all, it does not respect the distinction between having a specific object and having a very general object. It certainly appears that grief is directed at the death of a particular person or the loss of a relationship with that person. At the same time, however, it can envelop all aspects of one's relationship with the world. In addition, although grief may last for a long time, it varies considerably during that time, distinguishing it from both brief emotional episodes and stable moods.

This chapter will develop a phenomenological account of what I have called the *two-sidedness* of grief: how it can be about something specific and yet, at the same time, encompass everything. First of all, I will make clear how the intelligibility of one's experiential world can come to depend upon a particular person, who is both an entity within the world and a condition of possibility for that same world. Then, I will show how this two-sidedness is inextricable from grief's process structure. Grief is neither an episodic emotion nor an assortment of disparate episodes spread out over time. It is a process, the unity of which derives from the unity of the life disturbance that it navigates. A range of emotional experiences share this two-sided, temporally extended structure. Hence, thinking of human emotions as brief episodes, abstracted from the context of a human life,

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risks oversimplification and misunderstanding. Our emotional lives look very different when we take grief as our starting point, rather than a brief, decontextualized episode of anger, joy, or fear.

My account in this chapter will place particular emphasis on how a grief process involves negotiating tensions between the explicit acknowledgment that someone has died and an experiential world that continues to implicate the person. I will suggest that established distinctions, such as that between propositional belief and unthinking habit, fail to capture the relevant experiences. This sets the scene for chapter 3, which addresses how the bodily phenomenology of grief contributes to its two-sidedness and process structure.

2.1 The Unity of Emotion

Grief is often said to be an "emotion," but this does not tell us much unless we have a good grasp of what emotions are. In addressing the nature of emotion, one of the problems we face is that of specifying how various candidate ingredients of emotion together constitute a unified whole. Why is there an "emotion," rather than just an assortment of other things that happen to coincide spatially and temporally? Suppose we start with two well-known and seemingly conflicting theories of emotion: William James (1884) proposes that emotions are feelings of bodily changes, while Robert Solomon (1976/1993) instead maintains that they are evaluative judgments. There is at least something to be said for both views, as it seems that emotions are both felt and directed at states of affairs that concern us. So, it is tempting to accept that they incorporate judgments, feelings, and perhaps other ingredients as well (such as perceptions, patterns of attention, and action tendencies). However, in virtue of what do these ingredients together comprise a distinctive type of psychological state? When addressing this question, there is a risk of vacillating between what Jesse Prinz calls the "problem of plenty" and the "problem of parts." The problem of plenty arises when we attempt to accommodate all the different features of emotion but, in so doing, fail to account for how they "hang together" and lose sight of the overall phenomenon. The problem of parts then surfaces when we try to tidy things up by identifying which ingredients are essential. The most plausible answer seems to be "all of them," taking us back to the problem of plenty (Prinz 2004, 18).[1]

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The situation is further complicated by the need to specify what it is for things to "hang together" in the right way (Dancy 2014). The players in a football team, the two sides of a coin, the Earth and the Moon, the morning star and the evening star, and the numbers 1 and 2 all relate to each other in importantly different ways. Likewise, there are many ways in which the constituents of an emotion might be said to "hang together." The task is to show not only *that they do* but also *how they do*.

The motivation for accepting that emotions involve multiple components stems at least partly from the recognition that (a) emotions are intentional states (one is afraid *of* the dog, happy *about* getting the job, and hopeful *about* the situation) and (b) emotions incorporate feelings as essential constituents. If feelings are taken either to lack intentionality altogether or to be intentional states that can have only one's own body, bodily parts, bodily properties, and bodily states as their objects, then the acceptance of multiple components is inevitable. If emotion includes feeling, and if feeling cannot account for the world-directed intentionality of emotion, then emotion has to include something more.

One way of deflating the problem is to maintain that some emotional feelings do, after all, have world-directed intentionality, a position I will support in chapter 3. This leaves open the possibility that certain emotions have a singular, essential ingredient—they are intentional feelings, felt evaluations, or forms of affective intentionality. However, even if such an approach can accommodate some episodic emotions, it does not help us in the case of grief. Various different experiences, thoughts, and activities, including other types of emotions, *do* seem to contribute to grief, regardless of whether or not its constituent feelings have world-directed intentionality. For example, a former student of mine described grieving over the death of her grandfather and, in so doing, feeling anger toward the chair he used to sit on. Now, it seems plausible to suggest that someone who is not grieving could experience anger of a similar quality, directed at one or another object. Given this, we could deny that the anger is part of the grief. Indeed, we could subtract all of the contingent accompaniments of grief, including other types of emotions associated with it, and see what is left over. But then we would end up losing sight of the phenomenon altogether. During the course of grief, a person might feel hope, despair, sadness, anger, fear, love, gratitude, guilt, jealousy, and regret, where all of these feelings relate in one or another way

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to the fact that someone has died. There are also wider-ranging feelings of being lonely, lost, confused, abandoned, adrift, cut off from the world, or somehow lacking in ways that are hard to pin down and describe. If all of these were excluded from our account of grief, we would not be left with a purified grief experience but, most likely, nothing at all.

We could instead maintain that grief is a "complex emotion" (Price 2010, 30). More specifically, it is a complex emotion that incorporates other types of emotion. However, the problem we face is not merely that of specifying how various constituents, which occur at around the same time, interrelate. There is also the more challenging *problem of temporal parts*. Even if it is accepted that grief incorporates other kinds of emotions, such as anger, a person does not stop grieving when she stops feeling angry. So, grief is not only more encompassing than its emotional constituents; it also outlasts most or all of them. It somehow extends over time, despite being punctuated by periods when the bereaved person is unconscious or not preoccupied in any way with the deceased. This is consistent with the widespread view that grief is not a state or episode but a *process* of some kind.[2] But how does a gappy sequence of phenomenologically diverse episodes together amount to a singular experience of grief? The answer, I suggest, can be found by solving a related problem. It is not merely the case that grief *can be* something that lasts for a prolonged period, an observation that applies equally to certain episodic emotions, but also that grief *must* do so. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1953, 174) offers the following well-known remark: "'For a second he felt violent pain.'—Why does it sound queer to say: 'For a second he felt deep grief'? Only because it so seldom happens?" He adds that feeling grief now is somehow analogous to "playing chess *now*." Hence, while it makes sense to say that someone felt angry or jealous for a very short time, the very idea of episodic grief is somehow peculiar. What seems strange, even incoherent, is a scenario where someone grieves genuinely and intensely but then abruptly stops; the grief is not suppressed or delayed but altogether gone—it is back to business as usual.

Why, then, might grief be necessarily rather than contingently extended? To answer this question, I will turn to a neglected but important aspect of the structure of emotional experience: its *two-sidedness*. With this, it becomes clear why certain emotions have to take the form of temporally extended processes.

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2.2 Two Sides of Emotion

There is general consensus among philosophers that, in responding to something emotionally, we register its value, significance, practical meaning, or importance to us. It is often stated or implied that such properties are *experienced* as inherent in the objects of emotion: the rampaging bull *looks* frightening; the film *appears* exciting. This kind of talk might give the impression that emotional ways of experiencing things are phenomenologically localized: a particular object of emotion is associated with evaluative properties that are consistent with the type of emotion in question. For instance, where someone is afraid of *p*, and where *p* is perceptually present, it is usually the case that *p* looks frightening to them. However, the structure of emotional experience is a lot more complicated than this. Whether or not we experience something as mattering in one or another way ordinarily reflects our various cares and concerns or *values* (into which we have differing degrees of explicit insight). To offer a straightforward example, my being afraid of the rampaging bull reflects the fact that I care about my survival. These values are not to be thought of in an atomistic way, with each of them contributing to our emotional responses independently of the others. Rather, they hang together to a large extent, as do the associated emotions.

In the philosophical literature, one of the most developed accounts of how concrete objects of emotion relate to what we care about is that of Bennett Helm (2009a, 2009b). He distinguishes between the target (or concrete object) of an emotion, the formal object, and what he calls the "focus."[3] Where the target is a raging bull charging in one's direction, the formal object would be threat. But what about the focus? Helm (2009a, 249) suggests that emotions consist in "intentional feelings of import." By import, he means the way in which the target of an emotion impacts (potentially or actually) on one's preestablished values. It is only in light of those values that the target is taken to possess one or another evaluative property. In the case of the bull, I value my life, my bodily integrity, and the avoidance of pain. Consistent with this, the bull appears threatening. The presupposed value is what Helm calls the "focus" of the emotion. In his words, the focus is "a background object having import that is related to the target in such a way as to make intelligible the target's having the evaluative property defined by the formal object" (Helm 2009a, 251). Helm adds that the

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relationship between emotions and their foci is holistic in nature. A given focus, such as valuing my life, *implies* a much wider range of emotional responses to events, which knit together in rational patterns: if one values *p*, then one ought to fear *q*, experience relief at *r*, and so forth. The foci around which emotional responses cluster are likewise holistically organized. This "rational structure of values" is, according to Helm (2009b, 48), "constitutive of one's identity."[4] In summary, then, the focus of an emotion can be conceived of as a web of interconnected values, relative to which things appear significant to us in the ways that they do. To the extent that these values hang together, our lives have coherence, consistency, and distinctiveness, as do our emotional responses to events.

Others have made complementary points, often by appealing to the notion of "concern." For instance, Frijda (2007/2013) maintains that emotions are responses to events that impact on our concerns, and Roberts (1988) takes emotions to be "concern-based construals" of objects and situations. Nussbaum (2001, 19) also emphasizes this aspect of emotion, in observing that emotions reveal the manner in which things are "salient" to our "well-being," while Ben-Ze'ev (2000, 19) observes that registering something as significant involves relating it to "*a certain background framework*." Complementing Helm's view that this "background" can be thought of in terms of our "identity," Glas (2017, 144) refers to the "double intentionality" of emotions: how they are directed at concrete objects and simultaneously at the self. Emotions, he says, reflect a concern for the survival and integrity of the self. They are "self-referential," in ways that we do not always have explicit insight into. In other words, they do, or at least can, tell us something about ourselves—what we care about and how coherent our concerns are. It can be added that this self-referential side of emotion is often less phenomenologically salient than the concrete object and its evaluative properties. There is thus a tendency to neglect it and to focus instead on how an object of emotion appears to a subject.

It should be added that this "focus" or "self-referential" aspect of emotion is not just partly responsible for generating emotion; it is also an important *constituent* of emotional experience. As we will see, it is experienced neither as an internal state of the subject nor as an evaluative property attached to a particular entity or situation. Rather, for the most part, it is integrated into the phenomenological *world* that operates as a backdrop to our various experiences, thoughts, and activities. In turning to this, another feature of

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emotional experience becomes apparent—its sophisticated, *dynamic* structure. As Nussbaum (2001, 45) suggests, an emotion is an intelligent process, one that "moves, embraces, refuses."[5] We can identify what is distinctive about emotional experience by bringing together the themes of *world* and *dynamism*. What makes an episode or process *emotional* in nature is not the inclusion of one or more core components, such as feelings, perceptions, or judgments. Instead, it is the dynamic relationship between focus and concrete object or target. The object of emotion is experienced *through* an evaluative framework that is integral to the structure of one's experiential world. However, it destabilizes that same framework, in ways that can be subtle and localized or profound and wide-ranging. So, there is a circular process of varying subtlety, complexity, and duration, whereby an object of emotion affects the very structure through which it is evaluated, in a manner that then feeds into ongoing experience of that object.[6] Emotional episodes and processes are thus distinctive, in putting into question what might otherwise be taken for granted as a backdrop to activity and thought.

This feature of emotional experience has not gone entirely unnoticed. Pugmire (2005, 42) remarks on how an emotion can "reconstitute its prevailing setting," while Ben-Ze'ev (2000, 33) writes, "Emotions indicate a transition in which the preceding context has changed, but no new context has yet stabilized." Brady (2013) addresses one aspect of the dynamic, by emphasizing how emotions influence patterns of attention in ways that then motivate us to reflect upon and better understand our values. This, he observes, can lead to revision of the very values that motivated our initial emotional response. However, the emphasis of Brady's account is specifically on how emotional experiences can elicit *explicit reflection*, through which we seek reasons or evidence for our emotions. Although this has a part to play, it does not capture the manner in which tensions between an object of emotion and an evaluative framework are experienced and negotiated over time. That requires a detailed consideration of how we experience the surrounding world, our bodies, our thoughts, time, and other people. To my knowledge, nobody has addressed the dynamic in any detail.[7] And, if we are to understand the phenomenology of grief, we need to do so. Conversely, by studying grief, we can come to better appreciate a structure that it shares with various other kinds of emotional experience (those that take the form of episodes or longer-term processes directed at entities, events, or situations), but that is not always so apparent.

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2.3 A World Undermined

An event or situation can be experienced as impinging on the structure of one's world in either of two ways—by potentially or actually occurring. Whichever the case, the impact can be minor or major, localized or wide-ranging, and ephemeral or long-lasting. For example, finding that the café is closed and that a morning coffee must be acquired elsewhere usually involves a disappointment that is superficial and short-lived. In contrast, living for a sustained period with the prospect of losing one's job or receiving a diagnosis of serious illness is likely to unsettle one's world in ways that are both wide-ranging and prolonged. Other emotions involve events that are highly significant at a particular time but have little or no lasting effect on one's world, as when avoiding a fast-moving car.[8] Grief over a death involves responding to something that has actually happened, where this can profoundly affect the structure of one's world over a considerable period of time. The extent to which bereavement impacts upon one's world reflects the degree to which and the manner in which the deceased was integrated into one's life. Consider our goal-directed projects. For the most part, these are not pursued in complete isolation from one another. There is also a degree of consistency between them. For example, it would be odd to invest much of one's time campaigning for nuclear disarmament, while spending the rest of it working on the development of higher-yield nuclear weapons. In addition, our projects depend on one another in various ways, with many being hierarchically organized. Some projects are also, of necessity, temporally ordered. One has to achieve *p* in order to then achieve *q*, followed by *r*.

A network of projects can come to depend upon an interpersonal relationship in various ways. Certain projects may only be intelligible in light of that relationship. This applies to all those cases where we do *p* for the other person or in order to further their interests, goals, or well-being. It also applies when *p* is done in order to achieve a shared goal, at least where that goal cannot be pursued alone, as when *p* is done in order to enhance *our* relationship. Other projects may continue to make sense without the deceased, but they become contingently more difficult or even impossible to pursue due to the absence of that person's contribution—it still makes sense to do *p* and I still want to do it, but I cannot do it without you. So, with the death, various projects become either unintelligible or at least practically unsustainable. They therefore need to be abandoned or revised and sometimes replaced with alternatives. Other projects, which do not depend

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on the deceased to the extent that they either lose their intelligibility or become practically sustainable, may no longer seem worthwhile. What mattered in light of one's relationship with the person does not matter to the same extent or in the same way without them. But the disruption does not end there. Numerous other projects are likely to depend indirectly on the relationship, insofar as they relate to projects that involved the person directly and have consequently collapsed. So, a whole network of projects, spanning much of one's life, may be rendered unsustainable.

However, the impact of bereavement on life structure is not limited to networks of goal-directed projects and the values that sustain them. A wider range of habitual activities and expectations can also come to implicate a particular person, as when expecting to see them upon returning home in the evening or when *we* go for *our* evening walks together. The same applies to other pastimes that are irregular and less frequent: it is *we* who enjoy going to the cinema or to a restaurant together. Bereavement thus disrupts the interconnected values that hold a life together, where "value" is to be understood in a broad way, so as to include everything that a person cares about in one or another manner. Some values are embedded in specific projects or contexts of practice, as when one cares about completing articles by deadlines or being punctual for work meetings. Others are less fine-grained and presupposed by large parts of one's life, as when caring about the well-being of a child or partner. Bereavement undermines projects and pastimes by disrupting underlying values. In so doing, it also disrupts more specific values that depend on those projects and pastimes. Overall, this can profoundly affect the structure of one's life, as illustrated by remarks such as the following:

> It has impacted every aspect of my life. Socially, financially, emotionally, physically, practically, everything has changed and new norms created. The world has shifted on its axis and I feel I am a stranger in the current world, feeling my way. (#35)

> My previous world disappeared because the person I did everything (and nothing) with was no longer there. (#38)

> It's a complete and total impact. Every aspect of your life is changed. (#14)

> I feel like everything about the world that I have known is completely foreign now. The world seems like a different place. (#17)

> Totally shattered my whole life. (#86)

> Initially, it felt a bit like a foundational piece of the universe was missing. (#194)

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As mentioned in section 2.2, a stable network of projects, cares, and concerns can also be conceived of in terms of a sense of "self" or "identity" (although it is certainly not the only referent of those two terms). Thus, profound grief is sometimes said to involve a disturbance or loss of self. It is not uncommon for people to offer remarks along the lines of "part of me has died," "I died with her," "I'm incomplete without him," and "I don't know who I am anymore." Although such talk may appear clichéd on occasion, it remains informative. In an important way, profound grief does impact on self-experience, on a sense of *who* one is. The way in which one's life structure can come to depend on another person encompasses various *categories* with which one identifies, each of which attaches to norms, expected patterns of activity, and ways of interacting with other people. These categories partly specify *who one is*, in relation to particular people and also wider society: I am a wife, husband, mother, father, daughter, son, teacher, business partner, religious practitioner, political party member, and so on. With bereavement, one can cease to belong to certain categories that were previously central to one's life: "you no longer feel part of a couple" (#65); "I have been a daughter all my life; I am no longer a daughter; life is forever changed" (#11).

However, the relevant sense of identity is not limited to category memberships of the form "I am an *x*." It also extends to projects, commitments, pastimes, and habits, expressed as "I am someone who believes, does, strives to do, enjoys doing, or is committed to doing *x*." We could think of all this in terms of what Christine Korsgaard (1996, 101) calls *practical identity*: "a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking." For Korsgaard, practical identity includes the likes of profession and religion, along with statuses such as being a parent, spouse, or friend. Together, they comprise a sense of who one is, which regulates activities by specifying reasons for action, prohibitions, and obligations. Korsgaard (1996, 102) refers to this as a "conception" of oneself, but what I have in mind here is broader in scope. With the inclusion of much that falls under "I am someone who does *x*," it is evident that not all aspects of practical identity are explicitly conceptualized, at least not unless or until they are disrupted by life events.[9]

Thus, a profoundly altered life structure or experiential world can equally be described as a loss of or change in oneself. For example, when asked "How did the person's death affect you during the hours, days, and

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weeks that followed?" one survey participant (who appears to have some philosophical training) responded by criticizing the question for implicitly assuming that bereavement leaves one's identity intact over time. Contrary to this, the respondent emphasizes how bereavement does not simply affect "me"; it can also alter the "me" that is being affected:

> I find I go rather blank when looking at this question, and I think this is because there's a sense in which it is not a "good" question in extreme bereavement circumstances. Somewhat as if someone had asked, say, "How did life itself ending affect you?" (Or as if, say, existence were thought to be a predicate after all.) Now of course, my life didn't end! But my point is that the "me" who was "affected" was itself radically ruptured by the massive jolt in the fabric of my existence. "In what ways did life go on?"—this somehow makes more sense; I remember how perverse it seemed that my organic life coursed on with its own imperative—that I ate and slept and so on. (#171)

It has been said that bereavement, in disrupting a taken-for-granted life structure, challenges or repudiates one's *assumptions*. For instance, Parkes (1998, 90) describes how, with the death, "a whole set of assumptions about the world that relied upon the other person for their validity are suddenly invalidated." However, to understand the two-sided process structure of grief, it is important to make clear what the relevant "assumptions" consist of. One possibility is that they are propositional attitudes of the form "Person B believes that *p*." It could be added that what distinguishes these from occurrent, momentary, and inconsequential beliefs, such as "B believes that there is a seagull overhead," is that they are consistently presupposed by B's various other beliefs, as well as by projects and associated activities. Hence, although they may be only infrequent objects of explicit reflection, they remain central to B's life. That being so, we might wonder why acknowledgment of a person's death does not lead to the swift, unequivocal rejection of all those propositional beliefs that depend for their truth on that person's being alive. One response is that it is simply a contingent fact about human psychology that extensive networks of beliefs take time to update. But that does not suffice to account for the sorts of *tensions* that are experienced during grief, which involve conflict between the explicit, propositional recognition that someone is dead and something different in kind, which runs counter to that recognition.

What needs to be acknowledged is how the relevant "assumptions" are integral to a person's *experiential world*, something that operates as a phenomenological backdrop to more localized experiences, thoughts, and activities,

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including propositional beliefs concerning the death. How, though, could the structure of a life or a sense of one's practical identity also amount to an experiential *world*? The answer is fairly straightforward: in light of our projects, pastimes, and habits, which presuppose and sustain networks of cares and concerns (or "values"), entities, situations, and events are experienced as *significant* or as *mattering* in interconnected, organized ways.[10] These ways of mattering track—to some extent at least—different emotion categories and their formal objects. In light of our cares and concerns, something might appear to us as exciting, threatening, disappointing, annoying, worrying, and so forth. Some types of significance relate to the impact of what has already happened, while others are concerned with what might have happened or what is anticipated to happen. Regardless of which, the relevant events can be experienced as significant for me, for us, for them, or for you. Where an experience involves anticipating something, this might be something imminent, something that could happen at any time, or something that will happen at a later time. There are also varying degrees of confidence and doubt over whether it will happen: *p* is inevitable; *p* is likely; *p* might happen; *p* is doubtful; it could be either *p* or *q*. In addition, what is anticipated has varying degrees of determinacy. An experience can involve the arrival of something quite specific or, alternatively, a much vaguer sense that something with a certain type of significance is coming. Experiences of mattering can implicate one's own agency and that of others in a number of ways: it is urgent; I have to do it; I have to avoid it; there is nothing I can do; there is nothing I could have done; those people can help; nobody can help; this is what I need to do; this is what ought to be done. The relevant aspect of experience thus has an intricate, multifaceted structure (Ratcliffe 2015, chap. 2).

To some extent, how things appear significant to us reflects established norms, roles, and artifact functions, giving stability to experience. A cup is for drinking from, regardless of who one is; a police officer matters in light of an established role; and the signs at the airport tell us where to go. However, the kinds of significance attached to many things also reflect the idiosyncratic structure of one's life. For instance, how I experience the arrangement of books, papers, pens, and IT equipment in my study relates to my current projects and associated concerns. So too do the ways in which I experience numerous other things as mattering during the course of daily life. Whether, when, and how something appears significant varies in light of my situation and priorities at the time. Nevertheless, insofar as

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my projects and values remain fairly stable, my changing experiences of significance will be organized in light of them.

Now, regardless of where a philosopher might take the limits of specifically *perceptual* content to lie, our immediate experiences of things often involve a sense of how they matter to us. We encounter significance as inherent in our surroundings, rather than first experiencing things and only afterward assigning one or another form of significance by means of inference. That applies regardless of whether or not the relevant experiences are labeled as perceptual or as nonperceptual. As I have suggested elsewhere, this aspect of experience can be analyzed in terms of possibilities (Ratcliffe 2008, 2015, 2017). How our experience is saturated with a sense of the possible is a consistent theme in the phenomenological tradition of philosophy. For instance, we can appeal to what Edmund Husserl calls the "horizonal" structure of experience. Our appreciation of what something is and our sense of its being perceptually present both depend, according to Husserl, not only on what is currently accessible to perception but also on an associated system of perceptual possibilities. This is inextricable from a nonconceptual, bodily appreciation of what to do in order to actualize those possibilities. An object might appear *as* something one could turn around so as to reveal a hidden side or *as* something that could be touched in order to experience a texture. The relevant possibilities are variably determinate. For instance, they could involve encountering a smooth surface or, alternatively, one or another kind of texture (Husserl 1948/1973, 1952/1989, 2001).

The analysis can be supplemented by acknowledging that experience includes not only possibilities for ongoing perceptual access but also practically significant possibilities relating to goal-directed activities. Things show up as mattering and as relating to potential activities in ways that reflect the structure of our lives—our projects, cares, and concerns. As Husserl also recognizes, many experiences of possibility take the more specific form of *anticipation*. For instance, in seeing a glass fall from a table toward a hard surface, my current experience incorporates a sense of what will happen next—the inevitable sight and sound of breaking glass. This anticipatory structure is illustrated by moments of surprise. I do not need to formulate the propositional belief "the glass will smash" in order to be immediately, prereflectively surprised by the sight of it bouncing off the floor like a rubber ball. Active engagement with our surroundings and passive expectation are both imbued with a sense of how unfolding events matter.

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For the most part, interactions with our practically meaningful surroundings take the form of confident anticipation. As I reach to pick up a pen, I am not usually faced with a host of conflicting possibilities such as its falling to pieces, rolling away, or dripping ink all over me. Only one possibility appears salient: that of my picking it up effortlessly and proceeding to write with it. The same applies more widely. What we ordinarily experience is a cohesive arrangement of confidently anticipated eventualities, which unfold in ways that are broadly in line with expectations and reflect our life structure. Granted, deviations do occur, in the guise of uncertainty, doubt, and surprise. But they tend to be minor and occasional perturbations of a confidence that continues to apply more widely.

This is how the structure of a life takes on the guise of an experiential world. The *world* (in the relevant sense of the term) is not an object of passive experience but a context in which we are actively immersed. It consists in a cohesive, unfolding arrangement of significant possibilities, which are experienced and acted upon in ways that reflect projects, cares, and concerns (Ratcliffe 2017). How other people are integrated into our lives can be understood in these terms. The ways in which things matter to us and the cohesive patterns of unfolding events into which they are integrated reflect a life structure that depends on relationships with particular individuals.

Given this phenomenological structure, there is potential for tension between what we explicitly take to be the case and the world within which we do so. As the practical meanings attached to various things do not change immediately, the experiential world can remain at odds with our explicit acceptance of something. The bereaved person may thus continue to experience *our* home, the sofa where *we* sit together, the room *we* are decorating, *our* holiday documents, the park where *we* walk.[11] The full realization that someone has died involves not only updating a system of propositional beliefs but also coming to experience and relate to the world as a whole in a different way.[12] Thomas Attig (2011, xxxix) calls this "relearning the world," something that involves "a multi-dimensional process of learning *how* to live meaningfully again after loss."[13] Similarly, Gillies and Neimeyer (2006, 36) refer to the task of constructing a "new reality."

With a distinction in place between a world that presupposes a particular person and the experiences and thoughts that arise *within* that world, we can better understand grief's two-sidedness. To be more specific, we can see

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how something experienced or acknowledged within the world can also imply the impossibility of that very world. An initial emotional evaluation undermines, to varying degrees, the backdrop against which it arises. As Sonali Deraniyagala (2013, 34) writes in her memoir, *Wave*, "They are my world. How do I make them dead? My mind toppled." The fact of someone's death is often described as incomprehensible, unfathomable, unreal, impossible. One knows full well what has happened, continues to inhabit a world that runs contrary to it, and experiences a tension between the two:

> The sense of unreality and disbelief. Like it hadn't really happened and was all a dream. (#34)

> In the last few weeks I have been bewildered at my inability to reconcile my absolute knowledge of his death with the utter disbelief that he is no longer here, that our life together has vanished into the past. (#192)

Writing of her own experience, the philosopher Susan Dunston (2010, 165) distinguishes two kinds of *knowing*: "I know certainly that my brother is dead, that he killed himself, and at the same time such a thing is inconceivable, inexplicable, and unknowable to me (in the clear and distinct way that Descartes sought anyway)." It is tempting to think of this tension in terms of a distinction between propositional cognition and unthinking habit. However, if we are to appeal to "habit" here, then it should not be construed as something nonconceptual and thoughtless. Those who are bereaved often retain a host of habitual expectations: "at the beginning, when I came into the house, I expected to see him there" (#59). But it is not only patterns of unthinking, practical, bodily expectation that persist despite one's knowing that the person has died. Habitual patterns of thought involving the deceased may also remain:

> Initially I was overwhelmed with grief. I found it hard to believe that she was gone. She was in my thoughts so often that it felt as though she was still with me. Sometimes when the house phone rang I forgot that she had died and expected to hear her voice. (#144)

Such experiences could be interpreted in terms of repeatedly forgetting something and then remembering it. Perhaps that is plausible in some instances. However, it does not account for others, which involve an ongoing experience of conflict between the reality of the death and enduring patterns of experience and thought. One acknowledges the death and *at the*

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same time continues to feel that it does not make sense, that this is somehow impossible, that it cannot be happening:

> Now, from time to time, there unexpectedly rises within me, like a bursting bubble: the realization that *she no longer exists*, *she no longer exists*, totally and forever. This is a flat contradiction, utterly unadjectival—dizzying because *meaningless* (without any possible interpretation). (Barthes 2009/2010, 78)

During the course of grief, some parts of one's life may come to integrate the reality of the death while others still do not. Conflicts thus arise only at certain times or in certain situations. There are also moments of revelation, which involve explicitly recognizing that one has been holding onto certain habitual patterns that no longer apply:

> And it wasn't until we were standing on Queenstown Road station, on an unfamiliar platform under a white wooden canopy, wasn't until we were walking towards the exit, that I realised, for the first time, that I would never see my father again. (Macdonald 2014, 106)

I am not aware of any established terms in philosophy that serve to mark—in quite the right way—the distinction between explicit, unwavering acknowledgment of *p* and a world that, in whole or in part, consistently or periodically, comprises the competing conviction that *not p*. It is not a straightforward matter of cognition, thought, or propositional belief versus thoughtless habit, feeling, or perception, given that patterns of linguistic thought are also integrated into the habitual world (a point to which I will return in chapter 4). It is also unclear where to locate "belief" in all of this. It could be maintained that propositional acceptance is both necessary and sufficient for belief. However, in the case of conscious, occurrent belief (in contrast to dispositional belief and belief conceived of as an enduring "state"), it seems plausible to maintain that belief also incorporates the sense or feeling of conviction. And, when explicit propositional assent conflicts with an experiential world, the sense of conviction remains with the latter: "I knew what had happened, yet I couldn't believe it" (#114). One endorses *p* but has an enveloping sense of *not p*. In cases of conflict, there is no straightforward relationship between the linguistic endorsement of a proposition and how one behaves, which might allow us to discern a consistent functional role associated exclusively with propositional "belief." We could adopt a permissive conception of belief, according to which it includes a range of dispositions, no unique combination being necessary or sufficient for counting as a belief (Schwitzgebel 2002). This would enable us

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to maintain that the relevant experiences involve two conflicting beliefs with different characteristics. One believes (in one way) that *p*, while believing (in another way) that *not p*. However, by endorsing a permissive conception of "belief," we only postpone the problem of clarifying what the relevant "beliefs" actually consist of and how they conflict with one another. We also risk rendering belief ascription uninformative, given the admission that a person can believe (in different ways) both *p* and *not p* at the same time. To understand the phenomenology of grief, and of emotion more generally, clarification is required of the differences between these types of conviction and of the tensions between them.

One candidate for marking the distinction is the term "alief," introduced by Gendler (2008) to identify a type of affective attitude that is ordinarily consistent with propositional belief but can also conflict with it. For example, one might *believe* that the rollercoaster ride is completely safe, while having a concurrent alief with the content "really high and fast; dangerous; stay away." However, postulating an additional attitude type does not capture the way in which propositional beliefs are ordinarily embedded in a much *larger* phenomenological context. In the case of grief, one does not simply *believe* that someone is dead while *alieving* something else. What competes with the propositional attitude is not another type of attitude with a circumscribed content but something much more diffuse and wide-ranging, something that one's various attitudes presuppose.

For now, I will settle simply for a distinction between propositional belief (albeit lacking in a certain kind of conviction) and world experience. This enables us to acknowledge that, while believing that *p*, perceiving *q*, remembering *r*, and various other intentional attitudes ordinarily operate *within* a preestablished experiential world, emotional intentionality (at least of the kind that characterizes emotional episodes and longer-term, dynamic processes) has a distinctive, two-sided structure. The world within which we encounter the object of emotion is itself in a state of flux, in a manner inseparable from how the object of emotion is experienced. There is a dynamic between evaluative experiences of concrete objects and the contexts that those evaluations both presuppose and undermine. Where mundane, everyday emotional episodes are concerned, this dynamic is more subtle; disruption is ordinarily localized and short-lived. However, with that qualification, the relevant phenomenology is common to a range of emotional experiences. The effects of positive life events can be conceived

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of in these terms as well. For example, joy at a major lottery win similarly involves evaluating something relative to a context of projects and concerns that may no longer apply. There is a distinction to be drawn between potential and actual perturbations of one's world. Whereas grief concerns something that has actually happened and cannot be reversed, dreading some event involves something that has not yet occurred, which will or might disrupt one's world in a certain way. Nevertheless, *potential* disruptions are also *actual* disruptions. Even the possibility of some event may throw actual habitual routines into question; one no longer takes things for granted in ways that one did. For instance, the prospect of having an airport runway built next to one's house would suffice to erode a sense of comfort and security. Other emotions involve relief from actual or potential disturbances. But here too, there are tensions between the localized content of an experience and its wider context—I still can't believe I don't have to worry about it anymore; I keep pinching myself to make sure it's not a dream. Hence, I suggest that what distinguishes a specifically *emotional* episode or process is its two-sidedness: the significance attached to an experienced object destabilizes the backdrop through which it is encountered as significant. It can be added that, in the majority of instances, it is not the emotion itself that disrupts. Rather, it is through the emotion that a disturbance of the habitual world is recognized and, importantly, negotiated.

2.4 Grief as a Process

By acknowledging the two-sidedness of grief and the tensions it involves, we can better see how grief amounts to a process, in a way that an assortment of experiences scattered over time does not. The two-sided structure of grief is essentially dynamic; it involves encountering something as significant in light of its potential and actual implications for the structure of one's life. However, it can take a considerable amount of time to appreciate the full extent of those implications and reorganize one's world accordingly. Recognition and response are inextricable; a sense of unreality, disbelief, or impossibility can only be overcome by changing how one experiences and relates to a practically meaningful world. Grief therefore has a direction, involving—at least typically—a movement toward reconciling the reality of one's current situation with the structure of one's life. Where the concrete object of an emotion has profound implications for one's world, the two

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sides of emotion can only be reconciled, if they are ever to be reconciled, over a lengthy period of time. So, grief *has to* involve a process.[14] However, we still face the question of how a grief process is unified. To address that question, I will first consider an answer suggested by Peter Goldie (2011, 2012) and identify where it falls short.

According to Goldie, grief is a process that involves "a complex pattern of activity and passivity, inner and outer, that unfolds over time." Furthermore, this temporal pattern is "explanatorily prior to what is the case at any particular time." So, it is not merely that grief involves lots of different things happening over time; a constituent of grief *is what it is* only in virtue of its participation in the larger process. The temporal whole is "ontologically and epistemically prior to the parts" (Goldie 2012, 56, 61). What makes a grief process more than the sum of its parts and also distinguishes it from other kinds of processes is, according to Goldie, its narrative structure. The ingredients of grief are held together by the "coherence of a narrative of the process—a narrative of a grieving." Grief is a type of process called a "pattern," where a pattern is identified by a "characteristic shape" that narrative provides (Goldie 2012, 61–62). For Goldie, central to grief's pattern is a type of autobiographical remembering that resembles free indirect style in literature—a style of writing that blends at least two different perspectives, usually that of a character and a narrator. Similarly in grief, when past events involving the deceased are recalled, one remembers how things were back then but in a way that is infused with a current perspective that includes acknowledgment of the person's subsequent death: "We relate to our past in a special way, realizing that things as they used to be, and as we remember them, can never be the same again" (Goldie 2012, 56).[15]

One problem with this account is its lack of specificity. When are the relevant narratives formed? Presumably, narration of an emotional episode need not occur at exactly the same time as the episode in question, as that would rule out any emotional experiences that are narrated afterward as potential ingredients of grief. But the alternative is equally problematic. Consider a scenario where the bereaved person experiences *p*, but *p* is not integrated into the right kind of narrative until twenty years later, leaving its status indeterminate until then. Conversely, a narrative that does integrate *p* into a larger pattern might be swiftly or gradually replaced by another narrative that does not. However, it is counterintuitive, at best, to claim that emotional episode *p*, occurring at time 1, was part of a grief

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process at time 2 but was written out at time 3, when it consequently ceased to be part of the process at time 2 as well. Hence, principled constraints need to be imposed on the timing of narration.

Without further refinement, a narrative approach also appears too accommodating. Bereavement narratives are not ordinarily the products of socially isolated individuals. As we will see in chapter 7, they draw on the resources of a society and culture. Moreover, they tend to be co-constructed with others, through dialogue and the exchange of memories and reflections. So, a token narrative can be partly mine and partly ours. And, if narratives are what unify grief, this applies to shared narratives as well. We thus end up with a single, token experience of grief, shared between two or more people. Perhaps experiences of grief can be *shared* in this strong sense, but the conclusion is reached too easily. More generally, where two or more people co-construct a single narrative concerning their experiences of something, this does not suffice to constitute a token experience that they share between them.

Narrative also gives us temporal unity too easily. One advantage of a process approach is its compatibility with grief having temporal gaps. Even if it is accepted that one ceases to *experience* grief during dreamless sleep, it seems wrong to insist that one grieves at times 1, 3, and 5 but not at times 2, 4, and 6. Conceiving of grief as a process is consistent with that intuition. By analogy, we might say that someone is in the process of writing a book, even when they are not currently typing something. But if narrative is the source of unity, then it could equally be said to unify any number of disparate experiences and events. A narrative can weave two sequences together into a meaningful whole, even where they occur at different times and are causally unconnected. Independent of the narrative itself, they bear no relationship at all to each other.

It is also unclear how a narrative approach might pin down the boundaries of a grief process, at least in a way that is nonarbitrary. I do not want to suggest that grief has a clear-cut endpoint, or to assume any particular account of what its endpoint might involve.[16] Even so, there is a larger problem, that of identifying grief at all, of singling it out from the larger patterns of a life. Solomon (2004b, 90) regards grief as a "continuation of love" for the person who has died, and Higgins (2013) notes various parallels between the transitions into married life and into widowhood, of a kind that indicate a longer-term pattern. Of course, one unified pattern can be part of another unified pattern, but there remains the question of how

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it stands out as a distinctive part. Even if it does, there is the further task of specifying what makes it a pattern of one type rather than another. Free indirect style, for instance, will not suffice to individuate personal grief. A similar fusion of contrasting perspectives occurs when reflecting on one's past in the light of any significant life event, such as remembering how one never used to worry about money, having since lost one's job.

Perhaps some or all of these concerns could be satisfactorily addressed by elaborating and fine-tuning the approach. However, there is a further objection, which leads me to look elsewhere for grief's unity: narrative coherence is not *necessary* for grief. We have seen that Goldie describes grief as a pattern with a "characteristic shape." But what is that shape? Consider the kinds of experiences associated with supposedly *pathological* grief (which I will discuss further in chapter 8). It has been suggested that what distinguishes at least some forms of pathological grief is a "struggle to integrate the loss into autobiographical memory," along with a wider "crisis in meaning" (Neimeyer 2006, 141, 143). Characterizations of pathological grief therefore emphasize, among other things, a *lack* of narrative coherence. Indeed, some experiences of grief may even erode the *capacity* to construct a coherent narrative (Riley 2012).

More generally, there is an emphasis in first-person accounts of grief on disruption, discontinuity, and lack of coherence. According to Barthes (2009/2010, 67), what is "utterly terrifying is mourning's *discontinuous* character," while Macdonald (2014, 14) writes, "I can't, even now, arrange it in the right order. The memories are like heavy blocks of glass. I can put them down in different places but they don't make a story." Hence, it seems that grief need not involve a distinctive and coherent narrative pattern. In fact, it can involve a rupture in life's pattern, a temporally extended loss of coherence. As we will see in chapter 7, narrative can contribute to the attempt—willful or otherwise—to comprehend what is happening and restore some degree of coherence.[17] So, it is plausible to maintain that narrative has some role to play in how many of us respond to bereavement.[18] Nevertheless, successful restoration of coherence through narrative is not essential to grief and neither is the attempt to restore coherence. Furthermore, narratives that are formed during profound grief often fail to hang together; they lack a cohesive shape that a narrated life more usually has, given multiple tensions between what has happened and the world in which it has happened.

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If narrative is not what unifies a grief process, then what, if anything, does? Let us return to Wittgenstein's observation that there is something "queer" about feeling profound grief for only a second. Having considered the two-sided structure of grief, we can spell out what this amounts to. Importantly, the temporal parts of a grief process are not just related to one another in a contingent, causal way. There are numerous relationships of implication between them. Consider the following two scenarios: (a) someone grieves over an unexpected death for fifteen minutes and then dies too; (b) someone grieves over an unexpected death for fifteen minutes and then ceases altogether to grieve. In the first case, we could maintain that there is a very short period of grief. Alternatively, we might deny that the person experiences grief at all, given that fifteen minutes is insufficient time for an emotional reaction to qualify as grief. However, it is more plausible, I suggest, to maintain that the person *starts to grieve*, in a manner comparable to starting to fall in love, and that the process is cut short. What about the second case? Suppose that the experiences in the two cases are identical for those first fifteen minutes. Should we then say that, here too, the person starts to grieve but stops abruptly? Let us emphasize that, after those fifteen minutes, they really do cease altogether to grieve; there is no delayed reaction, no repressed grief, no refusal to accept the death, and no further emotional disturbance of any kind. The experience lasts for fifteen minutes and that is it—over. Such a scenario is not merely unusual but incoherent. Scenario (a) is unproblematic because a counterfactual claim remains unchallenged: had the bereaved person lived, then that person *would have had* further experiences of a kind consistent with a grief process. In the absence of exceptional circumstances (such as discovering that someone is not dead after all or suffering a brain injury that impairs one's capacity to experience emotion), it seems that an emotional experience *must* be followed by other experiences at later times, in order for it to qualify as part of a grief process. This is not to suggest that only a certain, specific kind of experience can follow it. My claim is more modest than that: some experiences that follow it are consistent with grief, while others are not.

In case (a), the counterfactual points not only to how things would have gone had the bereaved person lived but also to how they *ought to go* in a case of grief. It has been observed that grief and mourning often involve having a sense of moral obligation toward the deceased (Solomon 2004b; McCracken 2005). For instance, one might feel that seeking to sever one's

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connection with the deceased would be disrespectful and wrong (Higgins 2013). However, the contrast between cases (a) and (b) points to something different: implication rather than obligation. In case (b), it is not just that the person grieves or starts to grieve and then behaves in a morally questionable way. Were that so, their subsequent conduct would remain compatible with the possibility of a grief process that started but did not get very far. Instead, the initial experience *implies* something about subsequent experiences. If we are to think of the person as grieving or starting to grieve, then we have to assume that this experience will be followed by experiences that are consistent with it.[19]

By appealing to grief's two-sidedness, we can identify why case (b) is incoherent. Grief involves recognizing and responding to a disturbance of one's world, something that takes time. Where grief simply stops, so does the process of recognition and response; one continues to experience and engage with the world in a manner that is incompatible with the reality of the death. So, it *cannot* be a matter of getting back to business as usual. Grief is not a feeling or a sequence of feelings that can be halted without consequence. In Helm's terms, it involves relating the target of the emotion to its focus and, with this, coming to *recognize* over time the actual and potential implications of a death for one's life structure (Helm 2009a). Where these implications are far-reaching and wide-ranging, the match between target and focus cannot be accomplished quickly. Instead of swift recognition, there is a gradual process of "sinking in" (to be further discussed in chapter 3), where comprehension, emotional response, and adaptation to loss are inextricable.

The unity of grief, I propose, is inherited from the unity of the disturbance that it recognizes and navigates. We have seen how cares, concerns, projects, pastimes, and habits are to a substantial degree integrated. Some of the relationships between them are causal, but there are also intricate patterns of implication. Although these can, in principle, be articulated in propositional terms, they do not themselves take that form. Rather, they are experienced in the guise of relationships between significant entities, events, and situations that are integral to a world *within* which propositional thoughts are entertained. The manner in which a death impacts upon one's world therefore has a structure; there are implications for certain projects, which relate to other projects, and so on. If a human life were utterly fragmented, such that the various effects of a bereavement did not relate to one another, then the associated grief would be equally fragmented. However,

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most human lives are not like that. Instead, the implications of a death are, to a large degree, integrated. Grief, conceived of as a dynamic engagement with these implications, is similarly unified. It involves recognizing and working through patterns of implication, engaging with and transforming a phenomenological disturbance in ways that reflect the structure of the disturbance itself. Paths are followed; possibilities point to further possibilities; loss of one thing points to further unraveling. This involves experiences of unreality, tension, conflict, presence, absence, negation, and revelation, which arise as discrepancies between explicit acceptance of the death and world experience are navigated. In most cases, the tensions diminish in intensity and frequency over time, as the reality of the death is integrated into one's world. Consider, for example, these passages from Juliet Rosenfeld's memoir, *The State of Disbelief*:

> I remember waking up early one Sunday weeks later in our house in the country, and looking out at the fields beyond our garden wall and, suddenly, catastrophically knowing he was not there, would never ever be there again. . . . I began to *know*, without thinking, that he was gone, in the same way that you know that your hand is attached to your wrist or that water comes out of the tap when you turn it on. (2020, 26, 35)

The incoherence of experiencing profound grief for a very short time thus stems from the involvement of numerous relationships of implication that are negotiated over time. Consistent with this, Rupert Read suggests that there is a distinctive "logic" to grief, where what might seem like "denial" contributes to a process that ordinarily leads to eventual acceptance in the guise of a changed world. It is, he says, a logic of "process and paradox," which can involve believing something, explicitly assenting to that belief, and still not accepting what has happened (Read 2018, 176–181). I have suggested that what gives this process its distinctive "logic" is the dynamic, tension-riddled interaction between what is experienced as having happened *within* a world and its implications *for* that world. In contrast, when we think through relationships between propositions, we do so from *within* a stable, presupposed world. But thoughts and experiences that arise within a world need to be supplemented by another kind of intentionality, which facilitates the revision of a life structure that they presuppose.

It should be added, though, that grief's direction is not attributable *exclusively* to the reshaping over time of one's *current* projects and pastimes. Sometimes, a bereavement does not require us to make significant

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practical adjustments, as when we grieve over the death of a friend or family member who has lived far away for some time. Nevertheless, grief still involves negotiating tensions between the reality of that person's death and the significance attaching to memories of them, as suggested by Goldie's account. Habitual patterns of thought involving the deceased will also require reorganization, as will any associated expectations and dependencies, such as calling on them (or being called upon by them) for support in certain circumstances, seeing them on specific occasions, or hearing from them periodically. Thus, a temporally extended process of reorientation is still required. It is also important to distinguish the task of engaging with bereavement's impact on one's *own* life structure (which I have emphasized in this chapter) from the distinctively *interpersonal* aspects of grief—experiencing, thinking about, and relating to the deceased. Nevertheless, as we will see in chapters 5–8, those aspects of grief are inextricable from the process I have described. For instance, how one reorganizes and reinterprets one's relationship with the deceased will depend on the manner in which one's world is altered and vice versa. Furthermore, I will suggest that whether and how one continues to experience and relate to the deceased contributes to the ability to navigate a disturbance of one's world over time.[20]

Should we go so far as to insist that grief *must* be temporally extended if it is to involve full acknowledgment of the death? Alternatively, it could be maintained that grief's process structure is attributable to the contingent limitations of human psychology. For instance, Moller (2007, 313) asks us to imagine super-resilient beings who comprehend the fact of loss but do not experience any grief. But does it really make sense to postulate such beings? On the face of it, yes. We can assent to the proposition that they are possible without apparent contradiction or incoherence. On reflection, though, matters are not so clear. Presumably, these beings also share their lives with others; their projects, pastimes, and habits depend similarly on relationships with others. So, they also suffer losses that impact on life structure. And, as they do not end up in a state of enduring denial, their lives must be reorganized in a way that does not involve a lengthy grief process. However, this is to contemplate the possibility of a phenomenology radically different from our own, one that does not involve finding oneself immersed in a habitually organized, practically meaningful world that one's thoughts, perceptual experiences, and activities presuppose. What might

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that look like? Unless we have some idea of the answer, it is not clear what, if anything, is being envisaged.

It can be added that working through the implications of bereavement involves making substantial changes to the structure of one's life. Previously taken-for-granted patterns are lost, while new patterns take shape. Without interacting with the world over a prolonged period, it is not clear how one's life could be reorganized in a coherent way. How are new projects, pastimes, habits, expectations, and ways of relating to other people formed? Instantaneous, complete recognition of loss would involve losing a life structure and having nothing to replace it with. The only way of adjusting to a significant loss without coming to experience and interact with one's surroundings in new ways over time would be for a new world to appear by magic or by means of some far-fetched scenario involving mind-altering technology. But the scenario in question does not involve recourse to such interventions. It is therefore doubtful that we can conceive of such beings at all, at least from a phenomenological perspective. To avoid navigating the kind of life disruption I have described, one would need to care for someone who has died but without that person being integrated into one's life in any significant way. Even if such a situation could be described without incoherence, it clearly differs from the vast majority of situations in which people experience grief and does not approximate anything that might be described as "deep grief." So, in response to Wittgenstein's remark, we can see why the prospect of someone experiencing deep grief for a second seems peculiar, even incoherent. Aside from enduring denial, the only alternative to a temporally extended process would be a new world materializing instantaneously and miraculously.

Something that remains unclear is whether the relevant process should be conceived of as most centrally a matter of *feeling* or, alternatively, some form of *cognition*. In the next two chapters, I will reject both of these options and argue that grief cannot be conceptualized adequately in terms of such oppositions. Chapter 3 will turn to the bodily phenomenology of grief, in order to show how bodily experience is implicated through and through. Then, in chapter 4, I will suggest that this same phenomenology equally involves linguistic thought and normativity. To understand the phenomenology of grief, especially those features of grief that people find strange, disorienting, and difficult to comprehend, it is crucial to acknowledge an aspect of experience that is common to "feeling" and "thought," something that does not respect distinctions between them.

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3 Grief and the Body

In chapter 2, I set out an account of the two-sidedness and process structure of grief. According to that account, grief involves recognizing and responding to a disturbance of the experiential world, something that can also be described in terms of life structure or a sense of *who* one is. A grief process is cohesive to the extent that it engages with patterns of implication that are integral to a life structure and to disturbances of that structure. Given this, one might be tempted to think of grief in broadly cognitive terms, as a matter of thoughts, judgments, evaluations, and the like. However, in this chapter, I instead emphasize the felt, bodily nature of grief, by (a) rejecting a distinction between bodily feeling and world experience, (b) reflecting on the anticipatory character of certain feelings, (c) showing how other people can contribute to the structure of experience in a similar way to one's own body, and (d) comparing the pain of grief to that of bodily injury.

The chapter begins by addressing the nature and role of emotional feeling. The feeling body, I maintain, is not merely an object of experience; it is also that *through which* we experience our surroundings as imbued with significant possibilities, as mattering to us in various ways. Hence, there is more to the comprehension of loss than the updating of relevant propositions; it also includes a felt sense of how things matter. The feelings in question are not to be thought of as fleeting qualitative feels or "qualia." Rather, they consist in dynamic experiences of anticipation, fulfilment, tension, and negation. This is illustrated by the experience of something "sinking in" emotionally, a process whereby it comes to *feel real*. I suggest that conceiving of feeling in this way enables us to better understand various experiences of absence and lack that arise during the course of grief.

Following this, I provide a detailed critical discussion of Merleau-Ponty's (1945/2012) comparison between experiences of grief and phantom limbs,

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according to which both involve retention of a habitual world in the face of loss. This makes clear how a sense of one's own bodily capacities and of relational possibilities involving another person together contribute to what matters, how things matter, and what appears achievable. They do so in ways that are structurally similar and also inseparable. The comparison between bereavement and loss of a limb makes it natural to think of grief in terms of an injury to the self. The chapter concludes by suggesting that this provides us with a way of understanding the *pain* of grief.

3.1 Emotional Feeling

Is the two-sided, dynamic structure of emotion a matter of cognition or, alternatively, feeling? In chapter 2, I identified a conflict between explicit, propositional belief and a form of conviction integral to how the world as a whole is experienced. One way of construing this is to pit cognition, on one side, against feeling, on the other. But the world-side of emotion includes more than just feeling. For instance, what conflicts with propositional belief can also include habitual patterns of linguistic thought that are associated with ways of experiencing and interacting with one's surroundings. Hence, one could instead argue that this aspect of experience is a matter of cognitive judgment. According to Robert Solomon, not all judgments are propositional in nature; emotional judgments consist in ways of experiencing and actively engaging with the world. An emotion, he suggests, is a "way of cognitively *grappling* with the world" (Solomon 2004a, 77). For Solomon, emotions are also *constitutive* judgments. In other words, they contribute to the structure of the experiential world, rather than being intentional states that arise within an already established world (Solomon 1976/1993). One might quibble over whether and to what extent emotions are *active*; grief more plausibly involves a blend of passive reception and active engagement. Nevertheless, Solomon's emphasis on interconnected, constitutive judgments is consistent with my account of an organized experiential world that incorporates patterns of implication and also with the dynamic structure of grief.

However, such a position can be endorsed without relegating bodily experience to a mere accompanying role. It is arguable that contrasts between the feeling aspect of emotion and its world-directed intentionality are misplaced. Many bodily feelings are themselves intentional and their objects are not restricted to one's own bodily states; it is *through our feeling bodies* that we

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experience things emotionally. This is analogous to the manner in which we perceive, via touch, entities that are external to our bodies and sometimes even at a distance from them, as when a cane is used to navigate or a texture is felt through a glove (Ratcliffe 2005, 2008, 2015).[1] If this is accepted, then specifically *emotional* judgments can be identified with emotional feelings or, at least, with certain types of emotional feelings.

First-person accounts of grief often indicate that bodily feeling is seamlessly entwined with a disturbance of one's relationship with the world: "When it strikes, the raw intensity of the feeling comes as a surprise. Life is rolled on its head, and we find ourselves off balance" (Whybrow 1998, 2). Perhaps, then, the terms "judgment" and "feeling" amount to different emphases, rather than identifying two closely associated but distinct components of emotion. That depends, though, on what is meant by "judgment," a term that Solomon (e.g., 2003, 2004a) came to understand in an increasingly broad way. Emotional judgments, he proposes, include *bodily* judgments via which one engages with the world. These can involve what others describe in terms of "arousal," "action readiness," and the like.[2] For that reason, as I have argued elsewhere, Solomon's later position turns out to be largely consistent with the seemingly contrasting view of William James (1884), who maintains that emotions are feelings of bodily changes (Ratcliffe 2008). This is evident when we take some of James's other writings into account, rather than restricting ourselves to his 1884 essay. In brief, emotions, for James, are neither nonintentional bodily feelings nor intentional feelings directed solely at the body. Rather, it is through our feelings that we experience our surroundings as mattering in various different ways. Furthermore, our most fundamental sense of the world and our relationship with it consists, for James, in a kind of pervasive, intra- and interpersonally variable *feeling* (Ratcliffe 2008, 2017). There is thus a risk of descending into a largely terminological dispute here, which distracts from the task of understanding other important aspects of emotional experience.[3]

Rejecting straightforward distinctions between feelings and cognitive judgments, evaluations, or appraisals is only a first step. In identifying an aspect of experience that can be described in terms of both, we arrive at something that is necessary for emotional experience but not *sufficient*. There are two reasons for this, both illustrated by the case of grief. First of all, it is plausible to maintain that every experience we have of every situation involves evaluations of a kind that could be described in terms

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of world-directed feeling, evaluative judgment, or—to introduce a third option—affectively charged perceptual experience. For instance, my computer keyboard and the pile of notes sitting next to it are currently experienced as significant, as mattering to me in certain ways relative to the ongoing project of writing this book. Nevertheless, I am not "emotionally" engaged with my surroundings, at least not in a way that could be contrasted with an "unemotional" frame of mind. So, if the difference between emotional and unemotional experiences is qualitative in nature (and I will suggest that it is), rather than being only a matter of degree, then it is something that appeals to judgment and feeling both fail to capture. Approaches that instead regard emotions as *perceptions* will face the same challenge; they must be able to distinguish something that is integral to all perceptual experience from what is more specifically emotional.[4]

All human experience may well be riddled with one or another kind of "affective intentionality" or "intentional feeling." But I am not concerned with something that is common to grief experiences and mundane experiences. For current purposes, it is more fruitful to adopt a contrastive approach, which emphasizes how emotional episodes and processes stand out: they engage with anticipated or actual *disruptions* of the mundane. This involves a distinctive type of intentionality, concerned with the implications of events for the experiential world within which those events occur. It can be described in terms of both feeling and cognitive evaluation. What matters is not which term we employ but whether or not we succeed in identifying the distinctive, dynamic structure of emotional experience.

A second shortcoming of the appeal to feeling is that the nature of characteristically *emotional* feelings requires further clarification. Once the possibility of intentional feeling or affective intentionality is acknowledged, there remains much to say about *how* the feeling body is involved in recognizing and navigating world disturbances. Importantly, the kinds of feelings central to grief are not synchronic *qualia* that somehow manage to incorporate cognition as well. Instead, they have a temporal structure, involving anticipation, fulfillment, tension, and negation. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, there is a tendency to think of emotions as brief episodes with localized objects, such as being afraid of the dog or happy about scoring a goal. Grief, however, is a temporally extended, dynamic, variably cohesive process. Consistent with this, feeling in grief is not only dynamic but also experienced *as* dynamic. Martha Nussbaum recognizes this, although

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she conceives of the relevant phenomenology in terms of judgment. Grief, for Nussbaum, is an "upheaval" of thought, something that impacts on one's "whole cognitive organization" (Nussbaum 2001, 80). The view that grief is a cognitive process does not imply that it involves what we might call *cold* or *detached* cognition. Nussbaum (2001, 45) suggests that reason itself is "dynamic"; it "moves, embraces, refuses." The emotional upheaval, the movement, is itself the recognition of something. This is not a matter of forming propositional attitudes with circumscribed contents, at least not in a way that could be contrasted with a disturbance of our habitual, bodily immersion in the world. For Nussbaum, it is as whole organisms that we experience grief and other emotions:

> Certainly we are not left with a choice between regarding emotions as ghostly spiritual energies and taking them to be obtuse nonseeing bodily movements, such as a leap of the heart, or the boiling of the blood. Living bodies are capable of intelligence and intentionality. (Nussbaum 2001, 25)

All of this could just as well be couched in terms of feeling. For instance, Furtak (2018, 70) echoes Nussbaum's acknowledgment that "the upheaval of grief *is* this recognition," while emphasizing the "felt recognition" of significance. Without this *feeling*, he maintains, we could not fully appreciate that someone we care for deeply has died. Hence, what matters is not so much whether emotions consist of one or another ingredient but how they involve a complex, dynamic process of recognizing and engaging with a life situation.[5] Reflecting on her own experience of grief, Nussbaum (2001, 80) describes the cognitive disruption and reorganization brought about by her mother's death:

> When I receive the knowledge of my mother's death, the wrenching character of that knowledge comes in part from the fact that it violently tears the fabric of hope, planning, and expectation that I have built up around her all my life. But when the knowledge of her death has been with me for a long time, I reorganize my other beliefs about the present and future to accord with it.

This passage conveys the manner in which emotional comprehension is both dynamic and bodily—the knowing is something that *tears* and *wrenches*. Furthermore, the full import of what has happened is not grasped immediately; it takes time to become integrated into one's life. However, Nussbaum does not draw an explicit distinction between two importantly different forms of cognition that are at work here: propositional belief and

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an experiential world with which it fails to accord. Referring indiscriminately to "belief" obscures the movement between qualitatively different types of conviction, either of which could be termed "judgment" or "belief." An important aspect of this movement is the sense of anticipation. Although the full significance of an event might not be recognized immediately, one's current experience can still include a variably determinate sense of *what is to come*, contributing to how the unfolding of emotion is itself experienced. This aspect of our emotional life is sometimes described in terms of things "sinking in" over time.[6] There is an awareness of one's current comprehension as inadequate, of having not yet fully grasped the import of what has happened. The experience points toward a reorganization that is yet to come, an emotional path to be followed.[7]

The acknowledgment "I have not yet comprehended that *p*" appears paradoxical, insofar as it implies an understanding of what one claims not to understand. However, the experience of something "sinking in" involves an experiential content that is initially inchoate. It is progressively resolved in a manner consistent with, but more specific than, what was earlier anticipated. Feelings of this kind are more generally familiar to us. For example, suppose that I am struck—while absorbed in the writing of this book—by a vague feeling of wrongness, followed by a more specific sense of having forgotten something, then of having forgotten a meeting, and, finally, of having become distracted and forgotten to join a scheduled, online meeting with a particular person. The initial experience of wrongness unfolds over time, as the nature of what has happened becomes progressively clearer. Yet the propositional content that I eventually arrive at and the kind of significance it has for me remain consistent with the initial feeling.[8] Furthermore, that feeling points toward the process of recollection and clarification that ensues. In the case of grief, an initial proposition, "that person is dead," is not integrated into one's experiential world, but there may be a sense of it is *as* something still to be integrated. The experienced dynamism of the process consists not merely in movement but in a sense of what is coming, something that changes over time as things *sink in*.

The notion of "sinking in" is closely related to that of emotional "depth." Some emotions are said to be deeper or more profound than others. Furthermore, they may be experienced *as* deep or profound. Depth is often associated with the recognition that something has yet to sink in, that it will take time, that there is further upheaval to come. So, greater depth

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tends to involve longer duration, at least where an emotion concerns something that has actually happened, rather than something momentous that is anticipated for a short while but never occurs. How should we think of "depth"? A helpful account is developed by David Pugmire, who associates the depth or profundity of an emotion with the extent to which its object impacts on one's concerns.[9] As we saw in chapter 2, those concerns are structured; some are more fundamental than others, and there are multilayered relationships of dependence. So, a human life ordinarily has what Pugmire (2005, 40) calls an "architecture," a structure that can be disrupted by circumstances to differing degrees and in different ways. Emotional depth reflects how integrated a person's concerns or values are and the extent to which an object of emotion affects them. It can thus be distinguished from intensity. The emotional experience elicited by riding on an extreme roller-coaster may well be intense, but it does not imply a change in life structure, unlike—say—receiving tragic news. Pugmire adds that, for an emotion to be genuinely deep, the experienced significance of events must match their actual significance.[10] Hence, the actual depth of an emotion is determined in part by factors external to the relevant experience.[11]

For current purposes, I am concerned with the experience *of* depth, regardless of whether that experience corresponds to the realities of one's situation. This, I suggest, is an aspect of emotional feeling. It does not require a complex system of judgments, tracing out the implications of an event for one's life. The emotional feeling only has to point to something; it need not contain a comprehensive grasp of it. What it points to are patterns of unraveling and, in some instances, their potential avoidance. Sometimes, even the initial experience of depth takes time to set in. On other occasions, though, there is an immediate recognition that something will have profound repercussions, that the habitual patterns of a world will unravel, that the process has begun. The feeling itself has a two-sided structure. It is not only directed at a specific object of emotion but also toward the world within which that object is encountered. What I currently *feel* is not fully captured by the content of a given moment—the feeling points beyond that. It is more like a sign toward something than a map of it, a sign that can be more or less accurate.[12]

Granted, explicit, conceptual evaluation and reevaluation have roles to play as well. But they are not essential to the feeling of depth or profundity, to the sense that one's current experience of an event or situation impacts

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upon its context in ways that signal the onset of a prolonged emotional process. A current emotional experience can incorporate a sense of its being inadequate to the moment, something to be transformed, surpassed. With this, the procession of feelings is experienced *as* a singular process, an unfolding pattern of anticipation and realization. Thus, emotional feeling in grief is not a matter of static phenomenal qualities but of direction and loss of direction, of things resolving progressively or failing to do so, and of being receptive to initially inchoate possibilities.

3.2 Presence and Absence

I have suggested that felt anticipation contributes to how a grief process is *itself* experienced. However, the dynamic, anticipatory structure of feeling is also integral to how we experience the *surrounding world* during grief. In particular, various experiences of absence and lack (which may be localized or wide-ranging, enduring or ephemeral) arise when patterns of felt, bodily anticipation are negated or remain unfulfilled. Such experiences further illustrate why a distinction between feeling and cognition is unhelpful here. A felt experience can incorporate a sense of something or other as lacking or absent. Given this, it could equally be described in terms of a judgment concerning what is or is not the case. Consider, for instance, the all-enveloping sense of a particular person's absence. A set of habitual, bodily expectations involving that person persists to some extent after his death. These include the expectation of encountering him in particular locations or situations, such as when entering a certain room or participating in activities that involved him. When those expectations are negated, the resultant experience is comparable to Sartre's well-known description of waiting to meet Pierre in a café, where Pierre fails to arrive (Sartre 1943/1989, 9–11). When someone else enters and is encountered as "not Pierre," the absence of Pierre is experienced in a localized way, in the guise of negated expectation. However, it is also experienced in a more diffuse manner. How the café as a whole appears is shaped by the continuing expectation of meeting Pierre; one's surroundings appear significant insofar as they point to that prospect. The whole scene thus takes on the form of a background to an absent foreground, akin to a picture frame without a picture. When that background endures, Pierre's absence is itself present. Even though one might explicitly endorse the proposition "Pierre will not come to the café" with

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complete confidence, the café persists as background. A system of anticipation remains in place, while more specifically directed expectations, with contents approximating the likes of "Pierre is coming through the door right now" and "one of those people over there might be Pierre," arise fleetingly and are then negated.

A grief process can similarly include frequent realizations that *she is not here* and, occasionally, *this is not her*, some momentary and others more enduring. These might be more pronounced at certain times and in certain places. However, it could be that one's experiential world is shaped by the person to such an extent that there is a continuous interplay of anticipation and disappointment, with one's surroundings constantly pointing to possibilities that can no longer be actualized. It is often remarked that those who are grieving engage in "searching" behavior (e.g., Bowlby 1980/1998; Parkes 1998, chap. 4). The term "searching" may well encompass a range of different experiences, thoughts, and activities. Even so, many of these plausibly involve habitual, bodily patterns of anticipation that are integrated into one's activities, rather than propositional attitudes that motivate behavior (such as "I desire to see A" and "I believe there to be some chance of encountering A if I do *p*"). First-person descriptions such as the following suggest a dynamic interplay between prereflective, habitual anticipation and negation, rather than acting on the basis of explicit beliefs or desires:

> My daughter has a key to my flat and when she uses it my heart still jumps as though it's my husband coming home. Lots of times I have turned to say something to him and have been upset that he's not there. (#41)

> Every time there is a creak on the stairs or a car in the drive, I expected it to be him. (#71)

> I always expected my husband to come home every day: that expectation drained me daily. In the end I had to move to a new house because that's the only way I could stop that feeling. I frequently reach out in bed for his hand: I set the table for two people and I still subconsciously cook for two people. (#82)

Where episodic, localized experiences of negation are frequent and arise in a wide range of circumstances, they can also add up to a more pervasive sense of absence and lack. As C. S. Lewis (1961/1966, 41) writes, "I think I am beginning to understand why grief feels like suspense. It comes from the frustration of so many impulses that had become habitual." The surrounding world continues to be experienced as a setting for someone's

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appearance. Specific expectations are disappointed one after another, but a larger framework of anticipation persists, comparable to Sartre's café. One's surroundings thus appear *lacking*, in a way that also constitutes the sense of a particular person's *absence*.

There are good reasons for thinking that such experiences are not, first and foremost, a matter of propositional cognition—of believing that *p* and then remembering that *not p*. First of all, there is often a disconnection between what is taken to be the case propositionally and what is anticipated. Second, the relevant phenomenology is consistent with a much wider range of experiences, which plausibly involve a bodily, felt sense of disappointed expectation. For instance, I experience the items on my desk as offering various interconnected, significant possibilities, which complement my current projects and activities. But suppose I reach for my cup of coffee, only to find that my hand grasps thin air, that I knock the cup over, or that the coffee has gone cold. In all three scenarios, there is the recognition that something has failed to match my expectations. But this does not imply that those expectations were precise. Numerous different events can accord or conflict with the same indeterminate set of expectations. As a car drives along the road outside, as I hear the sound of passing conversation, as a bird flies past the window, and as an email appears in my inbox, I do not anticipate those specific events occurring at those particular times, but there is no surprise. All are consistent with a more diffuse set of expectations, which unfold—for the most part—in a harmonious fashion. In contrast, a camel walking past would appear immediately incongruous.

It would be implausible to insist that all instances of anticipation, fulfillment, and disappointment involve propositional attitudes. Given that our experiences have an anticipatory structure that spans a vast range of different scenarios, this would end up implicating an infinite number of propositional attitudes. Instead, as proposed in chapter 2, we experience our surroundings as imbued with various different kinds of *possibilities*. Many of these take the more specific form of *anticipation*, something that is inextricable from felt, bodily tendencies. When reaching for a cup that is absent, we *feel* the surprise. And, as we set eyes on the camel, we are immediately struck by its incongruity, in a way that is inseparable from our bodily engagement with the situation—we are drawn to it in a certain way.

Another important aspect of grief that can be understood in these terms is the experience of a gulf between one's own world and that of other

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people. For many or all of *them*, the world carries on in the way it always has, but one is somehow detached from it all: "Planes still landed, cars still drove, people still shopped and talked and worked. None of these things made any sense at all" (Macdonald 2014, 15). This form of experience is not specific to bereavement; it also arises in other cases where an actual or anticipated event has a profound impact on one's own life, while being of little or no consequence for the lives of most others. For example, here is how Aleksandar Hemon describes experiences of driving to the hospital in order to be with his terminally ill daughter:

> It took me about fifteen minutes to get to the hospital, through traffic that existed in an entirely different space-time, where people did not rush crossing the streets and no infant life was in danger, where everything turned away quite leisurely from the disaster. . . . I had an intensely physical sensation of being inside an aquarium: I could see outside, the people outside could see me inside (if they somehow chose to pay attention), but we lived and breathed in entirely different environments. Isabel's illness and our experience had little connection to, and even less impact on, the world outside. (Hemon 2013, 190, 201–202)

There is a marked disconnection here between Hemon's own concerns and those of other people, amounting to an experience of distance or contrast where previously there was commonality.[13] This sense of being somehow apart from the shared world is a prominent and consistent theme in first-person accounts of grief. There are frequent reports of being confronted by a gulf between one's own world and the world of others. Their world just carries on regardless, in a manner that one struggles to comprehend:

> I feel overwhelmed sometimes with how the surrounding world just carries on like nothing has happened. (#20)

> The world carried on turning, I was a mere part of the audience not a participant, I felt. (#51)

> It's like I'm looking in from the outside. (#55)

> When you lose someone, you wonder how the world can carry on spinning. Everyone is carrying on with their lives but, my husband isn't in this world anymore. (#59)

> I felt like the world was carrying on and leaving me behind as my world felt like it was standing still. (#110)

> It feels as if you are in a glass bowl, with everything going on normally around you, but you're not participating. (#239)

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Felt anticipation is central to experiences of this kind. In chapter 2, I described tensions between propositional recognition and an enduring experiential world. But, even in the very early stages of grief, one's world is not *wholly* undisturbed in the face of what has happened. Certain significant possibilities cease to be experienced, while others are experienced *as* negated, *as* no longer applicable. Ordinarily, we experience many kinds of possibilities as accessible not just to ourselves but to others as well. The path is encountered as something *we* can walk on, the bench as something for *us* in general sit on, and so forth. When one's own life is disrupted, possibility *p* need not be experienced as altogether gone, as negated outright. Instead, what was once a possibility for *us* might be experienced as a possibility *for them* but no longer *for me*. This would not apply in the case of a public bench or walkway, which are unlikely to implicate the deceased in any particular way. However, there are many other cases where something is experienced as available in a certain way to *us*, in virtue of other possibilities that are specific to *me* or to *you*. For instance, a shared workspace may be accessible to us in virtue of our distinct roles. Similarly, a bar may appear as a place that offers the same opportunities for all who are there but only due to their separate groups of friends. More generally, a social or professional environment can be experienced as offering something to *us*, rather than just to *me* or *them*, but in a way that depends on projects and associated possibilities that are person-specific and highly varied. So, where one's own life structure is bound up with that of a particular person, bereavement can involve a widespread loss of possibilities for participating in larger social situations.

It is thus an oversimplification to state that some possibilities are experienced as *mine*, others as *yours*, and others as *ours*. What is experienced as negated might be a possibility of *mine* but one that also opened up other possibilities that were *ours*. Given this, the negation of habitual patterns of anticipation can amount to a sense of being cut off from social life. This schism between one's own world and that of others is not always experienced in quite the same way. It could be that one's own loss is at the forefront of the experience and that the public world appears of little consequence: "the lives of others are trivial" (#87); "the surrounding world felt pretty unimportant" (#144). Alternatively, one's exclusion from that world might itself be a salient and distressing aspect of grief. One is still drawn to its possibilities but unable to engage with them due to loss of life structure.

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This experience is often described in terms of feeling or being "lonely": "everything goes on as normal and you feel detached from it, isolated and lonely even in a crowd" (#47). Sometimes, the sense of estrangement is accompanied by feelings of anger, jealousy, or resentment, directed at those who have not endured comparable losses: "I felt and sometimes still do feel at a distance from it all. Occasionally I still get angry, or not angry but jealous, when I see retired couples together" (#85). However, what is common to all cases is a pervasive sense that one's own possibilities for participating in social situations have been lost, while the possibilities of others continue to unfold.

A different but closely related phenomenon is the *fragmentation* of one's world. A grief process involves numerous experiences of tension. While some of these involve propositional beliefs coming into conflict with experience, there are also instances where certain aspects of the world accommodate the death while others still do not. Consider how we experience artifacts that were once integrated into the life of the deceased, such as clothes and tools. In some cases, an object may continue pointing to possibilities *for* that person, but we experience those possibilities *as* negated, *as* past; it *used to be* significant in those ways. At the same time, however, other situations or configurations of artifacts may continue to offer live possibilities involving that person. Consider this passage from Simone de Beauvoir (1964/1965, 98), concerning a time shortly after her mother's death:

> As we looked at her straw bag, filled with balls of wool and an unfinished piece of knitting, and at her blotting-pad, her scissors, her thimble, emotion rose up and drowned us. Everyone knows the power of things: life is solidified in them, more immediately present than in any one of its instants. They lay there on my table, orphaned, useless, waiting to turn into rubbish or to find another identity.

The knitting materials appear as a coherent system of salient practical possibilities, together implying the actual or potential presence of Beauvoir's mother. But it no longer fits into a larger world from which her mother is absent; the possibilities that it points to conflict with that wider context. Its significance is not yet experienced as past; it does not accommodate the death in the way that certain other things do.

Through these various examples, we can thus see how grief involves a complicated interplay between possibilities and their negation, something that involves felt, bodily anticipation more so than the formation and subsequent rejection of explicit propositional beliefs.

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3.3 Losing a Limb

The role of bodily anticipation in grief is not limited to experiences of *negation*, *absence*, and *lack* that arise in coming to recognize the implications of what has happened. To the extent that patterns of anticipation persist, they also constitute a sense of the deceased as somehow still *present* (although this is not the only form taken by sensed-presence experiences in grief, as we will see in chapter 5). Aspects of the world endure in ways that continue to specify the actual or potential presence of the deceased. In chapter 2, I identified this as the source of tension between the unequivocal propositional belief, "A is dead," and a more diffuse form of conviction, amounting to "A is still here." What I want to do now is show how the relevant experience is structurally similar to and also inextricable from experience of one's own body. To do so, I will explore in depth some of the similarities and differences between experiences of grief and of phantom limbs.

First-person accounts of bereavement often state that it is somehow like losing a part of oneself: "still feel as though part of me has died" (#30); "losing my husband feels like I've lost part of myself" (#71). Some also make more specific comparisons between bereavement and losing a limb. Bereavement is like amputation, and grief is like learning to live without an arm or a leg. The following interview excerpts, from Valentine (2008, 100), are representative:

> It's as though I have to live without my arms or something like that—without something, but I can't put a finger on it because it's not visible. . . . I have to try and learn to live without this vital you know like my sight or something, because that's how integral my dad was.
>
> Something I've kept in mind is that I really feel like I've had an amputation and I can't see which limb has gone and that it's not a visible limb, but it most certainly is an amputation—there's no other way I can describe it.

Similar comparisons can be found in published autobiographical accounts of bereavement. For example, Adri van der Heijden (2015, 286) writes, "What else is your child but an external enclave of your own flesh and blood? . . . A part of me has been amputated, so how will I ever be able to say I feel at home with my body?"[14] In addition to describing the predicament of bereavement as like that of *having lost* a limb, first-person accounts also compare the pain or suffering of loss in the two cases: "It was like

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having a limb amputated. I felt like my skin was turned inside out and my nerves were all exposed" (#66).

Comparing bereavement to loss of a limb serves at least to emphasize the profundity and painfulness of loss. Valentine (2008, 100) thus takes the comparison with amputation to convey both the "extreme nature of the pain of loss" and the "extent of the loss." However, there is more to it than this. What we have here is not just a set of culturally established metaphors and analogies that people draw upon in order to stress how important somebody was to them and how much they have been affected by bereavement. The two experiences can also be structurally similar in more specific and philosophically informative ways (which is not to suggest that this is *always* so; both admit considerable diversity and we should be wary of overgeneralizing). In elucidating these similarities, my principal aim is to elaborate on the analysis in chapter 2, by showing how another person can play much the same role in shaping experience, thought, and activity as one's own bodily capacities and habitual dispositions. Moreover, a clear line cannot be drawn between the phenomenological role of one's own body and the roles played by interpersonal relationships; the two are inseparable. Phenomenologically speaking, the boundary between subjectivity and intersubjectivity is indeterminate, as is the boundary between one's own bodily *feelings* and the sense of being with a particular person. Given this, bodily experience should not be thought of as a discrete ingredient of grief, to be set apart from its cognitive and interpersonal dimensions.

We have already seen that experiences of significance or mattering are not atomistic; they amount to an organized, cohesive structure. The sustenance of that structure depends on a combination of four factors, which together specify whether and how features of our surroundings matter to us:

1. **The body**: Our bodily capacities and dispositions specify what we are able to do, as well as the kinds of bodily performances required. Thus, changes in bodily capacities and dispositions, if accurately reflected in how we experience our surroundings, affect what appears significant and how.
2. **Projects and values**: How things matter to us reflects a backdrop of interrelated projects and values. Insofar as our projects and values are cohesively organized, so too are our experiences of significance. Long-term projects in which we are heavily invested involve goals and aspirations

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that stretch far into the future. They also encompass numerous subprojects, which relate to one another in ways that are largely consistent.

3. **Other people**: Sustaining a coherent set of concerns and projects requires certain ways of relating to other people (specific individuals and others in general). What we are able to accomplish is not just a matter of our own abilities; it is also reliant on the abilities and intentions of others. Often, it is *we* who are committed to a project, where that project would be unmanageable, unintelligible, or bereft of worth as a solitary pursuit. Things also matter to us insofar as our projects and wider concerns incorporate care *for* others and obligations toward them.
4. **Norms, society, and culture**: Although the significance of our surroundings is in some respects idiosyncratic, much of it is shared. Social and cultural norms of various kinds, including artifact functions, norms of performance and etiquette, and moral norms, give the world an enduring, shared structure, which our projects ordinarily presuppose.

These four factors contribute to experiences of significance in ways that are inextricable. For example, suppose I am browsing in an antiquarian bookshop and find myself drawn toward a particular book that I had been seeking for research purposes (one that could not be obtained online). How I experience the book is symptomatic of (1) bodily capacities that enable me to read it, (2) my commitment to a research career and more specific projects that stem from this, (3) interpersonal and social relations that render my life as a researcher viable, and (4) shared norms concerning walking into shops, buying things, and so forth. Only with all of this in place does the book appear significant in a certain way. Disturbance of any one of these factors could, potentially, disrupt my world in such a manner that relevant projects and associated possibilities become unsustainable. Social or cultural upheaval, the loss of a particular person, a voluntary or involuntary vocational change, or a loss of bodily capacities could all bring about a temporally extended adjustment process, involving tensions between propositional beliefs and world experience, moments of disbelief, a sense of absence and lack, and the gradual *sinking in* of something. We thus experience our surroundings through our felt bodily dispositions, but we do so in ways that equally reflect our relationships with others, our projects, and situational norms.

It should be added, however, that the phenomenological role of the body is not restricted to its being a *medium* through which we experience

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and engage with our surroundings. Grief can also profoundly affect the body as an *object* of experience. After writing that the absence of his wife is "not local at all" but all-enveloping, C. S. Lewis then corrects himself:

> But no, that is not quite accurate. There is one place where her absence comes locally home to me, and it is a place I can't avoid. I mean my own body. It had such a different importance while it was the body of H's lover. Now it's like an empty house. (1961/1966, 12)

As well as encountering significant possibilities through the body, we experience our bodies themselves as having significant possibilities. And, for Lewis, these included being the body of his wife's lover. With his wife's death, his body is experienced as lacking, as pointing to an absence. The body is comparable in this respect to how various possessions might appear. But it is also distinctive, given that only one's own body is simultaneously a subject of experience, an object of one's own experience, and a former object of someone else's experience. This is why, for Lewis, the absence is inescapable and enduring, rather than being something that waxes and wanes with changing situations. One's own body is the only worldly object that one cannot escape from. Furthermore, it may be the object that is, above all others, infused with another person's potential presence. However, in the remainder of this section, I will focus instead on experience of the body as *subject*, as a system of felt dispositions through which one experiences and engages with a significant environment. This will aid us in seeing the structural similarities between bereavement and bodily injury.

In a 1975 study, Colin Murray Parkes explores, in depth, the similarities and differences between grief and reactions to the loss of a limb. He concludes that the two have much in common and that they also tend to follow a similar course over time:

> This included an initial period of numbness, soon followed by restless pining with preoccupation with thoughts of the loss, a clear visual memory of the lost object and a sense of its presence. Defensive processes, reflected in difficulty in believing in the loss and avoidance of reminders, were also evident. (Parkes 1975, 204)

Both responses, Parkes suggests, centrally involve a "psycho-social transition," an adjustment process whereby one worldview (construed not merely as a conceptual representation of the world but also a way of relating to and interacting with the surrounding environment) is replaced by another.

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Although there were some differences in responses to bereavement and amputation, Parkes notes that these had all but disappeared after the first thirteen months. The only exception was a "sense of the presence of the lost object"; while 56 percent of amputees continued to have phantom limb experiences, only 14 percent of bereaved subjects had comparable experiences of the deceased as present (Parkes 1975, 207). Interestingly, twelve of the interviewees had experienced both amputation and bereavement, and they further emphasized the phenomenological similarities.

Parkes's comparison between phantom limbs and the felt presence of the deceased is dismissed outright by Ramachandran and Hirstein (1998, 1623–1624). A phantom limb, they maintain, is to be accounted for in principally neurobiological terms rather than in terms of psychosocial adjustment processes of the kind seen in grief. Hence, the claim that a phantom limb experience is analogous to a situation where someone is "unable to believe that her husband has died" and "has a strong sense of his presence" should not be taken seriously. In fact, this appraisal is rather unfair. Parkes explicitly acknowledges the obvious neurobiological differences between the two. Indeed, he attributes the higher relative frequency of phantom limbs to the fact that bereavement is a matter of psychological adjustment, whereas both physiology and psychology contribute to the generation of a phantom limb. However, I will suggest in what follows that even this is to concede too much. The similarities to be addressed here are not limited to phenomenological structure; the physiological effects of bereavement can also be similar in certain respects to the effects of losing a limb.

In comparing phantom limbs to the felt presence of the deceased, it is important to acknowledge that neither experience is adequately characterized in terms of a localized entity seeming to be present when it is actually absent. As we have seen, there are different *ways* of experiencing absence, an observation that applies equally to presence. To illustrate this, I will turn to Merleau-Ponty's discussion of grief and phantom limbs in his *Phenomenology of Perception*. Merleau-Ponty suggests that the two have a common structure, involving a kind of presence quite different from that of a perceived entity situated in an already given world. In contrast to Parkes, Merleau-Ponty rejects *additive* models that attempt to account for phantom limbs in terms of distinct physiological and psychological components. Instead, he suggests, they should be conceived of in a unitary way, in terms of the "movement of being in and toward the world" (1945/2012, 80). To

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explain, when we think of a phenomenon in terms of physiological and/or psychological processes, we take for granted that the organism already finds itself in a world, where it then relates to features of its surrounding environment in one or the other way. However, as we saw in chapter 2, the sense of being situated in a world is itself a phenomenological achievement, one that tends to be overlooked by scientific conceptions of cognition.

Merleau-Ponty suggests that phantom limb experiences occur when the habitual world is preserved despite changes in bodily capacities. After the loss of an arm, things continue to appear salient, significant, and accessible in the ways they did before. Although one sees that the arm is no longer there and knows—in a reflective, propositional way—that it is gone, the surrounding world says otherwise: "To have a phantom limb is to remain open to all of the actions of which the arm alone is capable and to stay within the practical field that one had prior to the mutilation" (1945/2012, 84). According to Merleau-Ponty, anosognosia (denial of illness and, in the type of case he is concerned with, paralysis) can be understood in the same way; a person is unable to move one side of her body, but her practical field remains intact. Its retention requires avoiding situations that would draw attention to the loss, a point that also applies to grief:

> We only understand the absence or the death of a friend in the moment in which we expect a response from him and feel [*éprouver*] that there will no longer be one. At first we avoid asking the question in order not to have to perceive this silence and we turn away from regions of our life where we could encounter this nothingness, but this is to say that we discern them. The anosognosic patient likewise puts his paralyzed arm out of play in order not to have to sense its degeneration, but this is to say that he has a preconscious knowledge of it. (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 82–83)

Here, I will focus specifically on phantom limbs and will not consider the phenomenology of anosognosia any further. (Even if it turns out that the analysis does not apply to anosognosia, I do think it offers valuable insights into phantom limb experiences.) In the cases of both bereavement and limb loss, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the correlate of an enduring system of practical meanings is a continuing sense of presence. This does not involve an entity appearing to be *here, now* when it is actually not. Instead, it consists in a variably specific set of practical dispositions, which are experienced as possibilities inherent in one's surroundings. One's experience continues to include possibilities that depend on having specific

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bodily capacities or on being able to relate to and interact with a particular individual:

> The amputee senses his leg, as I can sense vividly the existence of a friend who is, nevertheless, not here before my eyes. He has not lost his leg because he continues to allow for it, just as Proust can certainly recognize the death of his grandmother without yet losing her to the extent that he keeps her on the horizon of his life. The phantom arm is not a representation of the arm, but rather the ambivalent presence of an arm. (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 83)

Merleau-Ponty also characterizes these experiences in temporal terms. They involve, he says, a "previous present that cannot commit to becoming past" (1945/2012, 88). In other words, possibilities continue to take the form "*p* is currently significant in these ways" and thus to specify associated patterns of activity, rather than being experienced as extinguished, as past. His discussion sometimes reads as though phantom limbs and sensed-presence experiences originate in intention or choice; one actively strives to preserve a lost world, in a manner resembling psychoanalytic repression. However, Merleau-Ponty also emphasizes that both phenomena involve an aspect of experience that operates *below* the level of intention (conscious or otherwise). They are integral to the structure of a world within which we act and within which we form intentions of one or another kind. Even so, they are not merely mechanistic in nature and involve a kind of bodily purposiveness.

Of course, neither grief nor phantom limbs can be understood exclusively in terms of striving to *preserve* an impossible world. As I have emphasized, the habitual world also changes over time. The speed, extent, and nature of adjustment vary considerably, and explicit, effortful choices plausibly have some role to play as well. Consider an essay by Oliver Sacks (2005) on experiences of losing sight, which emphasizes how people adapt in quite different ways. In a case of "deep blindness," one eventually forgets what it was like to see. One even loses visual imagination, coming to inhabit a world bereft of the possibilities offered by sight. In contrast, some people actively, willfully preserve visual imagery and even continue to utilize it in goal-directed activities. Merleau-Ponty makes some complementary, albeit briefer, remarks on differing experiences of blindness, acknowledging that the practical field can be preserved to varying degrees and reconfigured in different ways (1945/2012, 81). Similarly, what is experienced following a significant bereavement or the loss of a limb is not merely "arrested

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time." There is interaction between the worlds of before and after, involving change.

Merleau-Ponty is right, I think, to maintain that phantom limbs and certain experiences of the deceased as present share a common structure. The limb and the person are present in an indeterminate, diffuse way; they are implicated in situations rather than being perceived constituents of situations. It is this sense of presence, with its recalcitrance to change, that conflicts with the propositional belief that someone is dead. How can the person be dead, when the world in which I entertain that thought runs contrary to it? Nevertheless, the account is incomplete, and there remains a great deal more to say about experiences of both kinds. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between image-like experiences (or, if you like, representations) of the body and the phenomenological role of the body as that *through which* we experience our surroundings. In other words, he distinguishes the body "image" from the body "schema," from how the body structures practically engaged perception.[15] Phantom limbs, he maintains, are to be understood in terms of the latter; they involve retention of habitual dispositions that appear in the guise of one's surroundings. Contrary to this, first-person reports of phantom limbs indicate that they can and often do have image qualities. For a 1997 exhibition entitled *After Image*, Alexa Wright interviewed amputees and then produced photographic images of what their phantoms *looked like*.[16] These images included quite specific characteristics, such as reduced diameter, partial retraction, or being frozen in a certain position. Of course, the relevant experiences are not themselves visual, but the point is that there can be a proprioceptive awareness *of* the limb that is sufficiently image-like for it to be described in fairly precise spatial terms. This is difficult to reconcile with the proposal that phantoms consist only of diffuse, ambiguous experiences of presence.

However, phantom limb experiences are multifaceted and diverse. Hence, it could be that Merleau-Ponty's analysis captures some of them or, at least, an important aspect of some of them. According to Ramachandran and Hirstein (1998), all phantoms involve a vivid sense of presence, but this core experience accommodates considerable variety. While between 90 percent and 98 percent of those who lose a limb experience a phantom almost immediately afterward, this sense of presence may fade within days or persist indefinitely. When phantoms do fade, they sometimes become shorter and/or change shape. Phantoms can also involve pain or cramping. For some,

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the limb remains rigid, perhaps stuck in an uncomfortable position, while others report experiences of voluntary movement. Others describe habitual, unthinking responses to situations, such as reaching out with a phantom arm to shake somebody's hand. To further complicate matters, phantoms are not specific to limbs; they can also occur after the loss of a breast, part of the face, or the penis.

Contrary to Merleau-Ponty's account, it is doubtful that a habitual world, preserved despite injury, can account for a limb that is frozen in position or a hand that is vividly experienced as protruding from a shoulder. Aplasic phantoms, which arise despite the congenital absence of a limb, pose a further challenge. If phantoms involve the retention of bodily capacities, which are to some degree innate but also habitually entrained, how can we account for the appearance of a phantom where no such capacities were ever present? It could be that aplasic phantoms are different in kind from others. For instance, Gallagher (2005, 92) suggests that they may not concern the body "schema" at all, whether innate or habitual. Instead, they are image-like phenomena. Consistent with this, aplasic phantoms often have a late onset, unlike post-amputation phantoms. In addition, they do not involve experiences of forgetting that a limb is missing, such as trying to walk with a missing leg. Even so, Gallagher also allows for the possibility that observing and interacting with other people somehow activates innate components of the body schema. Given this, it need not be assumed that even aplasic phantoms consist *exclusively* of image-like bodily experiences.

It could also be argued that phenomena such as phantom breasts and penises are principally image-based phenomena, given that breasts and penises are not integrated into "motor programs." However, that is questionable. Although one does not use a breast to act in the way that one uses an arm or leg, it is still integrated into habitual activities in all sorts of ways, shaping a sense of one's capacities for action as well as one's interactions with other people. The body as a locus of habitual dispositions amounts to a unified whole, rather than an assortment of motor capacities that are stuck together alongside inactive components. Consider a more mundane experience, which is analogous in relevant respects. Most of the time during the day, I wear glasses. When I take them off, I often forget shortly afterward that I have done so, where forgetting takes the form of pressing the bridge of my nose with my index finger, so as to adjust my glasses. It is not that I first form an explicit image of the glasses resting on my nose.

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Rather, they are integrated into my activities and habitually taken account of. So, even artifacts can be incorporated into patterns of bodily anticipation and experienced as present when absent, an observation that is consistent with reports of wedding rings on phantom fingers and watches on phantom wrists (Ramachandran and Hirstein 1998, 1607). If this much is conceded, then there are insufficient grounds for excluding body parts that are not directly involved in motor action from a schema-based account of phantoms.

Hence, I suggest that, although Merleau-Ponty does not provide a comprehensive account of phantoms, he does succeed in identifying an important *aspect* of many such experiences. Indeed, influential work on phantom limbs by Marianne Simmel in the 1950s identifies the body schematic component as most central:

> We regard the phantom as the symptom and result of a discrepancy between the schema and physical reality. Reality can change—a leg may be lost in an accident—but the schema persists, and the phantom is the experiential representation of this persistence. (Simmel 1958, 493)

Some phantoms clearly do involve retention of the practical field, as when the absence of a limb is forgotten during the course of habitual action: "The patient may 'forget' and reach out with the missing hand to grasp something, or to steady himself, or he may step on the phantom foot and fall" (Simmel 1958, 492). Retention of the practical field is also consistent with findings concerning the influence of prosthetic limbs on phantoms. Those who use them tend to experience more frequent phantoms than those who do not, suggesting that continuing use of the limb and consequent retention of practice are somehow implicated (Fraser et al. 2001). Furthermore, it has been observed that gradual loss of a limb and gradual loss of use prior to amputation are less likely to be followed by a phantom than sudden loss of a functional limb, again suggesting that the experience has something to do with the retention of practical dispositions (Ramachandran and Hirstein 1998, 1625). Where adjustment proceeds gradually, there is no sharp contrast between experience of a wholly intact practical field and recognition of its loss.

Comparable points apply to grief. A grief process is certainly not to be understood exclusively in terms of what happens to the "practical field" (as I will further emphasize in chapters 5–7, when considering the distinctively *interpersonal* aspects of grief). Nevertheless, this is an important aspect of

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grief. In the cases of both grief and loss of bodily capacities, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the preservation of a world that is no longer possible:

> The passage of time does not carry away impossible projects, nor does it seal off the traumatic experience. The subject still remains open to the same impossible future, if not in his explicit thoughts, then at least in his actual being. . . . New perceptions replace previous ones, and even new emotions replace those that came before, but this renewal only has to do with the content of our experience and not with its structure. Impersonal time continues to flow, but personal time is arrested. (1945/2012, 85)

Where grief is concerned, this description best captures certain predicaments associated with labels such as "complicated" and "prolonged" grief, which involve an inability to form new practical meanings and an associated failure to fully acknowledge the death (Neimeyer 2006). With this, a habitual world is preserved in the face of loss, albeit in a way that is lacking. (I will return to the topic of pathological grief in chapter 8.) Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty's account oversimplifies matters or, at least, does not tell the whole story. Although grief involves times when habitual patterns are maintained, these are not simply to be contrasted with times when one's loss is acknowledged. Comprehending and adjusting to loss also involves dynamic interaction between the two. As Stroebe and Schut (1999, 2010) put it, we "oscillate" between confronting and avoiding the implications of loss. So, what Merleau-Ponty describes is in fact part of a larger process of reconciling one's life structure with the implications of the death over a period of time.

Grief thus involves dynamic relationships between the retention and revision of practical meanings; the two are not mutually exclusive. Although some of these relationships involve a kind of *presence*, it need not be constant and unwavering, taking the form of an unchanging but impossible system of meaning. It might be more pronounced in some situations than others, and it might be conflicted, as when some aspects of a situation imply presence while others imply absence. Experiences of presence are also localized to differing degrees. A system of meanings that shapes one's world as a whole may presuppose the deceased in a diffuse, nonlocalized way, but other experiences more closely approximate a sense that the person is *right here*, *right now*. For instance, when walking into someone's office, where papers and unopened letters still lie on the table, there might be a sense of presence involving fairly specific patterns of anticipated activity and interaction. So, to reiterate, felt-presence experiences such as these are not simply a matter of experiencing

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something as there when it is not there. There is a less determinate sense of actually or potentially relating to a particular person, which is constituted by variably diffuse and sometimes conflicting systems of practical meanings. These experiences are equivocal, ambiguous, and quite unlike mundane perceptual experiences of entities occupying specific locations within an already given world. Consequently, they are difficult both to comprehend and to convey to others.

Similar complications arise when interpreting phantom limb experiences. Although many different kinds of phantoms have been identified and distinguished, the empirical literature remains lacking in an important respect. For the most part, it is maintained that a phantom appears as *present* or as *vividly present*, but nothing more is said about what this sense of presence actually amounts to. It is just taken for granted that we have a sufficient grasp of what it is to experience something as present. However, it is clear that certain experiences, which might be described in terms of felt presence, are quite unlike perceiving a particular entity in a particular location. Phantom limb experiences are diverse, involving varying degrees of localization, specificity, conflict, and ambiguity. It does not suffice to observe that a limb seems to be present; too many questions remain. Simmel (1958, 492) states that a person may be "more aware of the phantom extremity—even though painless—than of the contralateral intact limb." But what does this increased awareness involve? Is the person aware of the limb in the same way but to a heightened degree? Alternatively, is it experienced as present in a qualitatively different manner to the intact limb? Without more discerning phenomenological analyses, it is unclear what an experience of presence or heightened presence actually amounts to in any given case.

Even so, it is evident that not all phantoms are primarily a matter of retaining a practical field. Some are more image-like, more like encountering an entity perceptually. This, it could be added, distinguishes them from the experienced presence of the deceased. Again, though, comparable observations apply to bereavement. As I will discuss in chapter 5, some sensed-presence experiences are quite different from what Merleau-Ponty describes, closer to the experience of perceiving a person through a particular sensory modality. Others lack "image" qualities and involve a more diffuse sense of presence but are not to be accounted for in terms of retaining a practical field. Hence, in comparing grief and phantom limb experiences, we find that both can involve different *kinds*, rather than just different

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degrees, of presence. In order to appreciate the phenomenology of grief and, more specifically, its two-sided structure, it is important to acknowledge these differences. Otherwise, the tensions between different kinds of presence, and between different forms of conviction, will be misinterpreted or pass unnoticed.

Cursory descriptions of experiencing something or someone as present cannot succeed in distinguishing a perception-like experience of something or someone from the kind of experience described by Merleau-Ponty. To complicate matters, it may be that, in some instances, the two are better regarded as complementary aspects of a unified experience of presence—the room suddenly takes on the air of significance it used to have when she had just walked in and, in conjunction with this, one also senses her presence in a particular location. In fact, I doubt that the *phenomenological* distinction between image- and schema-based experiences is clear-cut. A practical configuration of the environment could be so specific as to imply a person's presence in a particular place. The experience has a gestalt structure. Her presence is not merely implied by what appears salient and significant; she is also part of the scene, integral to how it is organized. When such configurations arise fleetingly, it may be like briefly *seeing* a silhouette or shadow of the person. Alternatively, such an experience could involve a kind of presence *in* absence. Reminiscent of Sartre's café, the room appears like a frame without a picture, a system of expectations in the context of which someone is set to appear in a certain manner. Yet he fails to do so. Perhaps, on occasion, experiences of this latter kind are also communicated in terms of someone's presence. The current significance of one's surroundings implies his actual presence, in a way that conflicts with his visible absence.

3.4 A Part of Oneself

Although experiences of bereavement and losing a limb can be similar in several respects, one might think that some of the similarities remain fairly superficial. Even if it is admitted that there are perception-like experiences of the deceased and perception-like experiences of missing limbs, this need not be illuminating. We have all sorts of perceptual and perception-like experiences in all sorts of different situations. Furthermore, the fact that phantom limbs are largely explicable in neurobiological terms, while grief is not, could be taken to indicate that they are importantly different. A

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partial explanation of phantom limbs offered by Ramachandran and Hirstein (1998, 1608–1609) appeals to "plasticity in the somatosensory system" and processes of "remapping." Parts of the cortex associated with the missing limb are taken over by sensory input from elsewhere in the body, making it seem as though the limb is still present.[17] However, the comparison between grief and phantom limbs is not limited to their phenomenology; there are also physiological similarities. Of course, the sensorimotor processes involved in generating a phantom limb will be anatomically distinct from whatever processes are at work during grief. Nevertheless, there are functional commonalities between the roles played by other people and by our own bodily capacities in shaping experiences of significance.

I have suggested that we experience our surroundings as practically significant in light of projects and values that depend both on our bodily capacities and on our relations with particular people. Certain things matter to me in the ways they do only because of my concern for *you*. In conjunction with this, certain activities are only intelligible or only of value to me in light of that concern. Furthermore, what appears achievable reflects not just my own bodily and intellectual abilities but also what I can do in cooperation with you, what we can achieve together. Interpersonal relationships and bodily capacities can thus play similar roles in shaping world experience. That said, there are also differences. Losing a limb involves losing some very specific abilities and requires equally specific forms of adjustment. Loss of a person is likely to have a less selective, more diffuse impact on the experiential world. Even so, it is doubtful that this contrast applies in all cases. For a professional musician or sportsperson, whose life structure depends upon fairly specific bodily abilities, loss of a limb could amount to a pervasive loss of meaning from the world as a whole. And someone whose life revolved around a particular project involving another person, such as playing in a band or running a business together, could experience the loss of quite specific abilities with bereavement. One might object that similar points could apply to losing an accountant or a bank manager (at least where one has become exceptionally dependent on that person's services), without the relevant experience adding up to one of personal grief. Hence, it is important to reiterate that grief over the death of a person also involves certain additional, distinctively *interpersonal* types of concern; one cares *for* the other person in ways that one does not ordinarily care for one's bank manager. This aspect of grief will be discussed further in chapters 5–8.

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There is evidence to suggest that other people shape our experiences of salience and significance in ways that are not so different from the operations of our own bodies. What appears salient and how it is significant to us depend on whether we are with other people and on what those people are doing. Bayliss et al. (2007, 644) found that others' reactions to a shared environment influence one's own evaluations of it. Objects looked at with a happy expression by someone else are subsequently liked more than those looked at with disgust. A range of other empirical findings point to the conclusion that the value-properties of perceived entities are shaped by interpersonal experience and interaction:

> Converging evidence from behavioural neuroscience and developmental psychology strongly suggests that objects falling under the gaze of others acquire properties that they would not display if not looked at. Specifically, observing another person gazing at an object enriches that object of motor, affective and status properties that go beyond its chemical or physical structure. (Becchio, Bertone, and Castiello 2008, 254)

It is not just that perceived entities are evaluated in certain ways when another person is present. Those properties can endure even after the person has left; they are experienced as inherent in objects. Similarly, the *practical possibilities* that things present us with depend not just on what our bodies are able to do but also on what can be achieved with others (Sebanz, Bekkering, and Knoblich 2006; Pacherie 2014). There is even evidence that anticipating the actions of others can shape our perceptual experiences in a similar way to initiating an action oneself. For instance, when one presses a button to generate a tone, it is perceived as less intense than when the tone is produced at random. The same attenuation effect occurs when another person is observed pressing the button (Sebanz and Knoblich 2009).

To speculate further, the presence and intensity of such effects surely depend more specifically on the kind of social situation we are in and who we are with. For instance, the appraisals of a partner in the context of sustained interaction are more likely to shape perception of one's surroundings than a brief glance at the expression of a stranger. And repeated exposure to consistent appraisals is more likely to forge enduring evaluations. Unlike watching a stranger press a button, interacting with a long-term partner involves elaborate and structured systems of anticipation that continue to influence evaluative experiences and practical dispositions even outside of one's interactions with her. To add to this, one's sense of what is salient and

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how it is significant depends largely on projects, commitments, and concerns that are shared, many of which only make sense given the relationship. In many instances, projects are *ours* and, even when a project does not take this form, experience and activity continue to be shaped by concern *for* the partner. Furthermore, a sense of what is achievable integrates the anticipated presence and abilities of the partner in a stable, habitual way. Similar points apply to other relationships that involve a substantial degree of habitual, practical integration, such as relationships with parents, children, or siblings with whom we live.

It is important to distinguish these points from the observation that a close personal relationship can involve "we-intentionality," where things are experienced as significant "for us" rather than just "for me" and where one has the sense that "we are doing this" or "we seek to achieve this." It is debatable what the experience of "we experience/act" amounts to and how it relates to "I experience/act."[18] However, although I accept that a close relationship does involve "we-intentionality" and that the relevant experience requires further clarification, the point I am making here is broader in scope. Even when a situation appears as significant "for me," and even when something appears achievable "for me," another person can still be implicated in the relevant way. Certain things appear significant to me in light of projects and wider concerns that are ours; other things matter to me given my concern for you; and what appears achievable for me depends in part on what I habitually anticipate from you. Hence, what one experiences as *one's own* perspective (in contrast to *our* perspective) can equally depend on one's relationship with another person.

All of this points to the conclusion that another person can come to play a similar role to one's own bodily capacities in shaping one's habitual, experiential world.[19] Moreover, there is no clear boundary between the experience-shaping contribution of bodily capacities and the contribution made by potential, anticipated, and actual relations with other people. What I take to be my own perspective on the surrounding world does not incorporate a clear distinction between how the world appears to *me* and how it appears to *us*; the line between intrapersonal and interpersonal is unclear. Given this, it is tempting to take utterances such as "it is like losing a part of myself" and "it feels like part of me has died" literally. What has been lost cannot be identified specifically, as when pointing to the loss of a limb. Nevertheless, the two kinds of loss share a common structure.

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Something that was previously integral to one's ability to experience and engage with the world, to perceive things in structured ways that reflect a coherent system of projects, cares, concerns, and abilities, is now absent.[20]

We can appeal to the term "mutual incorporation" here, as employed by Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009). The idea is that, just as we integrate various props into bodily activities, perceiving and acting upon the world through them as though they were parts of our own bodies, interactions with another agent can involve a blurring of phenomenological boundaries between the two parties. In sustained, structured interactions, there is a "reciprocal interaction of two agents in which each lived body reaches out to embody the other" (2009, 474). Fuchs and De Jaegher emphasize losses of interpersonal differentiation that occur during tightly coupled face-to-face interactions, where the two parties remain in close proximity to each other. But the point applies equally to *habitual* forms of incorporation, which develop within close, long-term relationships. In such cases, incorporation does not require ongoing interaction. Even when the other person is not physically present, the relationship continues to shape one's practically engaged perceptual experience. Hence, this kind of incorporation is more profound, pervasive, and enduring than the incorporation that characterizes one-off interpersonal interactions and episodic or habitual couplings with items of equipment.[21]

So, it is important to distinguish the kind of incorporation involved in feeling connected to someone at a given time from an interpersonal permeability that I have sought to make explicit. Suppose Person A interacts with Person B and feels connected to B, somehow in unison with B. Even in a case of mutual incorporation, A continues to distinguish—to some extent—the perspective through which she experiences B from B as an object of her experience. She thus experiences herself as relating to B, rather than as fused with B. At the same time, however, A's perspective may continue to be structured by her longer-term relationship with B, such that the boundaries between her own subjectivity and B's subjectivity are blurred from the outset. Two ways of experiencing B therefore occur simultaneously: a sense of relating to B and a more subtle way in which A's own attitude toward and experience *of* B is already permeated by her relationship with B. The latter continues to shape experience and activity even when B is not present, also feeding into A's interactions with other people. This serves to further illuminate the two-sided structure of grief, which involves a conflicted way of experiencing B as both present and absent. A's explicit recognition of B's irrevocable absence continues to presuppose the relationship.

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I acknowledge that there remain important phenomenological and neurobiological differences between grief and losing a limb. Furthermore, experiences of both kinds are diverse and develop in a range of ways. Most importantly, *love* for another person is something that the comparison fails to fully capture. So, my claim is only that *some* central aspects of grief *can be* structurally similar to *some* central aspects of adjusting to the loss of a limb, not that the experiences can be mapped onto each other in their entirety. As Parkes writes,

> "You can't get an artificial Dad," said one amputee who had also lost a father, and it was the irrevocable nature of the loss which was emphasized by another amputee, a woman whose husband had died six years previously, "If you lose a leg you can tell yourself you're going to cope—but you never get a husband back." (1975, 206)[22]

Nevertheless, the similarities suffice to illustrate a point with much wider applicability: a sense of our own capacities, what matters to us, and what we might achieve can come to depend, in various ways and to varying degrees, on our relations with others. Comparisons between bereavement and losing part of one's body are not mere analogies that convey the closeness of a relationship. The two phenomena are structurally similar in a number of important respects and, moreover, inseparable. We experience things as significant, as mattering, through our feeling bodies. However, the kinds of significance that we experience as inherent in things reflect not simply our bodily capabilities but the integration of those capacities with life structure, interpersonal relationships, and shared norms. Networks of projects, values, and habitual expectations can therefore be rendered unsustainable or unintelligible by a range of different circumstances, including bereavement, relationship breakdown, unemployment, serious injury, chronic illness, and social or cultural upheaval. Hence, various different experiences of loss share a common phenomenological structure.

3.5 The Pain of Grief

An appreciation of the phenomenological similarities and relationships between bodily and interpersonal experience also aids us in understanding the "pain" of grief. In considering whether and how grief's pain resembles somatic or bodily pain, it should be kept in mind that bodily pain is multifaceted and phenomenologically diverse. So, it could be that grief resembles pains of type *x*, in virtue of property *p*, and/or that it resembles pains of

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type *y*, in virtue of property *q*.[23] Distinctions have been drawn between the sensory, affective, and motivational components of somatic pain. As well as being variably prominent in different instances of pain, there is compelling evidence that they are fully dissociable. A condition called "pain asymbolia" is said to involve pain sensation but without any unpleasantness or motivation to avoid the pain. Conversely, feelings of unpleasantness and associated behavioral tendencies can occur without pain sensation (Grahek 2007; Corns 2014b). Moreover, the unpleasantness of pain is not reducible to an inclination to avoid or escape something. As observed by Bain (2013), the unpleasantness of pain "rationalizes" action, whereas behavioral tendencies do not, suggesting that the two are distinct. Consistent with that position, it is possible to dislike a pain experience without being motivated in any way to avoid or seek relief from it. According to Grahek (2007, 39), only pain asymbolia involves complete retention of pain sensation combined with complete loss of affective response and motivational tendencies. Other cases that are described in terms of "pain without unpleasantness" actually involve finding the pain disagreeable, while not feeling inclined to act upon this.

It is highly doubtful that any one ingredient is *sufficient* for pain. Grahek refers to sensation without affect or motivation as "pain without painfulness" and to affect and motivation without pain sensation as "painfulness without pain." In line with this, one could maintain that sensation alone suffices for "pain." However, it bears little resemblance to most of those experiences we refer to as "pain." What remains without affect and motivation is just a "blunt, inert sensation, with no power to galvanize the mind and body for fight or flight" (Grahek 2007, 73). Perhaps pain sensation or some other component is at least *necessary*, but even that is doubtful. Corns (2015) considers what is sometimes called "social pain": emotional distress that occurs due to a change in interpersonal circumstances, without any associated pain sensation. There are, she suggests, insufficient grounds for insisting that this really does amount to *pain*. After all, unpleasantness without pain sensation is not considered sufficient for pain in other circumstances. For instance, a horrible taste in the mouth is not literally painful. Radden (2009, 111), in contrast, does allow for "pain and suffering that is nonlocalized and nonsensory." One way of resolving the issue is to endorse a pluralistic approach, according to which pains have various different components, none of which are necessary or sufficient. Indeed, Corns (2014a) advocates such an approach, while suggesting that there remain good reasons for excluding social pain. What it has in common with somatic pain is

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its unpleasantness and, even on a liberal conception of pain, unpleasantness is not enough.

However, first-person accounts of grief suggest that the resemblance between grief's pain and at least some uncontroversial experiences of bodily pain is much closer than this. A problem with referring simply to "pain" in this context is that it encourages a tendency to look for some elusive quality that is common to grief and certain bodily experiences. It is then difficult to offer a clear statement of what that quality actually amounts to or how we might determine whether or not unpleasant quality *p* is the same as *q*, or at least sufficiently similar to be classified as the same type of experience. To identify and further clarify the phenomenological similarities between bodily pain and the pain of grief, I suggest that it is more illuminating to focus on the common theme of injury and the experience of being injured or hurt by something. This might seem natural, in light of my earlier discussion of the comparative phenomenology of bereavement and loss of a limb. Indeed, that comparison could be extended so as to include pain. Phantom pain is experienced by between 50 percent and 80 percent of amputees and can involve different qualities, such as "stabbing, throbbing, burning, or cramping" (Flor 2002, 182).[24] Thomas Fuchs proposes that we understand grief's pain in a similar way. Insofar as bodily experience "incorporates" relations with particular people, the pain of their loss is comparable to that of a lost limb:

> The threads of mutual attachment and belonging are cut off, and the wound or pain that is now felt bears resemblance to an amputation of the "dyadic body" that one has formed with the other, and to the phantom pain that the amputee experiences. (Fuchs 2018, 47)

I want to focus instead on more general similarities between bereavement and the experiences of undergoing an injury, having been injured, and recovering from injury. Such comparisons are often drawn. For example, Parkes (1998, 6) writes,

> On the whole, grief resembles a physical injury more closely than any other type of illness. The loss may be spoken of as a "blow." As in the case of a physical injury, the "wound" gradually heals; at least, it usually does.[25]

First of all, though, it should be acknowledged that talk of "pain" during grief is not univocal. Many of those who are grieving also report unambiguously *bodily* feelings of pain, no different from kinds of bodily pains that are attributed to a variety of other causes or to causes unknown. One's body really does *hurt*:

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> My body also aches most of the time. (#21)
>
> Sometimes the physical pain becomes unbearable. (#25)
>
> I seem to suffer from more aches and pains than I did when my husband was alive. (#36)
>
> More headaches. Trembly. Pain in chest. Feel nauseous. (#72)
>
> I've had numerous aches and pains, stomach problems, musculoskeletal issues. (#74)
>
> I've had tension in my neck and feel like a lead weight is sitting in my chest. (#89)

Feelings that are described as bodily or physical and as painful need not be experienced as *exclusively* bodily in nature. Even somatic pains of various kinds can amount to ways of experiencing and engaging with one's surroundings (Kusch and Ratcliffe 2018). To be in excruciating pain is, at the same time, to experience one's environment as imbued with certain kinds of significant possibilities and not others. Nevertheless, we can at least say that certain bodily pains are experienced as *accompaniments* to one's grief. Although they might also shape how one experiences and relates to the world, they are not integral to the felt recognition of loss. In contrast, other distinctively *bodily* feelings are phenomenologically inseparable from the experience of loss. Some survey respondents remarked on how their loss is or was literally experienced as a form of pain, often specifically located in the chest:

> In the early days, weeks and months, I felt an overwhelming pain in my chest. I know now that it's normal to feel that pain. It was my heart breaking. I can still feel that pain as my heart will never heal, but I can manage that pain. (#20)
>
> The pain of grief chokes my throat and my heart does hurt with the pain of loss. (#164)
>
> Even the mental pain was somehow located—in the head and chest. (#171)
>
> Your heart does literally ache. I didn't know that. (#172)
>
> I'd suddenly find myself overwhelmed by waves of grief and sadness, and I'd just sit there sobbing for half an hour. And it hurt, physically hurt, with a dull ache in the chest. (#177)

What we have here is not just a bodily experience that accompanies loss. What is referred to as the pain *of* grief involves being hurt *by* loss. Furthermore, some say that this is the most terrible pain they have ever felt or that ever could be felt: "It is the worst pain I could ever experience" (#17); "incomparable; there is nothing like it" (#18); "there will never be anything else in my life that is as painful as losing my son" (#20). It is not just that

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the bereavement *causes* terrible pain, as the pain also has intentionality. The bereavement is experienced *as* a source of immense hurt or injury; one finds *it* painful. As Solomon (2004b, 80) writes, "We suffer when we grieve, but it does not follow that we suffer *from* grief." Rather, grief involves the experience of being hurt *by* something.

Similarly, many bodily experiences of pain involve not only *being in pain* but also *finding something painful*. I might just have a pain in my leg. Alternatively, it could be an experience of something acting upon my leg. Thus, in the cases of both grief and somatic pain, what is referred to as "pain" often has an intentional structure that includes occurrences and situations outside of one's own body. The common theme is that of being acted upon in an injurious, painful way. Someone who is grieving might say that it feels "raw," where "it" refers interchangeably to the pain, the grief, and the loss: "For the first couple of years, I can only describe my experience as feeling 'raw'" (#85); "the pain is still very raw" (#175); "it's still raw" (#45). What is wounded is not the corporeal body but something to which both bodily and interpersonal experience contribute. We can think of grief as involving an injury to one's life structure, self, or world: "the impact that the bereavement has on you wounds you" (#42). What this has in common with unambiguously *bodily* pain is not one or another kind of abstract, felt *quality*. Instead, the experiences share a distinctive, bodily way of experiencing the unfolding of possibilities. We are acted upon by something, subjected to it:

> For six weeks now, we have been living with a strangling loss. It is no idle metaphor. We have experienced, every single day, how a nagging absence can literally wrap its tentacles around your neck in a stranglehold. The scream stays stuck in your throat. Loss is a strangler who grants his victim no more protest than a hint of a gargle. (Van der Heijden 2015, 325)

Finding bereavement painful is not a matter of passively experiencing a simple bodily sensation. We experience the death as having a certain kind of significance, in a way that is inextricable from our bodily experience. It is something that runs contrary to our life structure, undermining our capacity for pursuing practically meaningful possibilities. Eugène Minkowski observes that the experience of somatic pain can have a similar form; there is a sense of being acted upon, in a manner that inhibits our engagement with the world:

> Intrinsically bound up in pain is the feeling of some external force acting upon us to which we are compelled to submit. Seen in this light, pain evidently opposes

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> the expansive tendency of our personal impetus; we can no longer turn ourselves outward, nor do we try to leave our personal stamp on the external world. Instead, we let the world, in all its impetuousness, come to us, making us suffer. Thus, pain is also an attitude toward the environment. (Minkowski 1958, 134)

Grief, as we have seen, consists in a temporally extended process whereby the reality of what has happened "sinks in." Hence, although the death has already happened, its significance is something that continues to be felt, to press in, to hurt. This is one of the key similarities between certain bodily pains and the pain *of* loss. The comparison also extends to the process of recovery from bereavement, which is sometimes described as like the slow, incomplete healing of a wound: "It's a bit like breaking an ankle that doesn't properly heal. When you dance, you dance funny, but that helps to make you the person you are now" (#42); "it may sound cliched, but it is like a wound, it heals but the scars are always there" (#141).

Hence, regardless of which bodily sensations might be involved in grief's *painfulness*, there remain important structural similarities between the pain of grief and somatic pain, involving a felt, bodily sense of the significance of what has happened or is happening. Once this is made clear, whether or not we then accept that the "pain" of loss really is pain comes down to a terminological choice: do we adopt a broad or narrow definition of pain by appealing exclusively to one or another set of criteria for identifying pain experiences? A more liberal approach would be to concede that different conceptions of pain are appropriate for different practical and intellectual purposes, and I have no objection to that. But, whatever the case, it is clear that the resemblance between grief and somatic pains extends far beyond their common unpleasantness.[26]

To summarize, by reflecting on various aspects of bodily experience in grief, we can better see how the process described in chapter 2 is also a matter of *feeling*. The two-sided, dynamic structure of grief involves a nonpropositional, bodily sense of anticipation. This is central to various different experiences of presence, absence, tension, and negation. In addition, it contributes to the experience of grief *as* a process. However, as I will argue in chapter 4, grief is not *felt* in a manner that is to be contrasted with what is *thought*. In describing this same phenomenological structure, we could equally place the emphasis on linguistic thought. Doing so brings to light another important aspect of the experience: what I will refer to as a sense of *indeterminacy*.

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4 Between Worlds

We have seen how grief involves tensions between aspects of experience that accommodate the death and others that do not. At a given time, the surrounding world may appear consistent with one's loss in some ways but not in others. In addition, there is alternation over time between pre- and post-bereavement worlds. This alternation is not simply a matter of moving between two differently structured realties. It is important to distinguish the following scenarios: (a) one moves between pre- and post-bereavement worlds, where the latter involves new networks of projects and concerns; (b) one ceases to inhabit the pre-bereavement world, but there is nothing to replace it with yet. In the case of (b), one does not have a *different* life structure; one instead confronts the absence of structure. Experiences of the kinds described in chapters 2 and 3 involve different balances (and sometimes imbalances) between loss of structure and establishment of new structure. To the extent that this balance is skewed toward loss, there is a heightened sense of what I will call "indeterminacy," a sense of lacking something that more usually shapes and guides one's experiences, thoughts, and activities.

In chapter 3, I emphasized the role of *feeling* in grief. In so doing, I also suggested that other people contribute to the structure of experience in ways that are similar to and inseparable from the contributions of one's own body. In this chapter, the focus shifts away from feeling and toward linguistic thought. Through a consideration of the phenomenology of indeterminacy, I will show how disturbances in habitual patterns of anticipation also encompass the experience of linguistic meaning. Thus, a seemingly true utterance can at the same time appear at odds with one's situation or bereft of meaning. To account for this, I draw on themes in

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the writings of Merleau-Ponty and William James, both of whom indicate that linguistic experience, like world experience, is infused with a sense of the possible. Grief, I propose, can involve a kind of linguistic experience where certain possibilities that were associated with one's words no longer apply, while others continue to do so. Consequently, an utterance can appear obviously true and at the same time somehow false. I add that it is important to distinguish different ways in which language works during grief. Words that operate in one way against the backdrop of a stable life structure can play different roles in the context of its disturbance, serving to stabilize, to further disrupt, or to express disruption. Hence, by reflecting on the phenomenology of grief, we arrive at the view that experiences of linguistic thought, and of written and spoken language, participate in the same anticipatory structure as our wider experiences and activities. Given this, it would be wrong to conceptualize disturbances of that structure in terms of distinctions between feeling and thought, cognition and affect, or unthinking habit and conceptual understanding. Grief involves a level of experience that does not respect such distinctions.

I go on to show how experiences of indeterminacy implicate the sense of time. This involves identifying a number of different ways in which temporal experience can be altered during grief. I conclude by turning to the relationship between grief's indeterminacy and rationality. Grief can involve the disruption of something that rational thought presupposes, fragmenting patterns of thinking and even altering relationships of implication between propositions. However, I suggest that this does not render it irrational. In fact, susceptibility to such disruption is integral to the ability to think in ways that reflect the realities of one's situation. Grief and other emotions are involved in the maintenance, repair, and reorganization of an experiential world that is presupposed by the capacity for rational deliberation.

4.1 No Path to Follow

I have discussed how grief involves various contrasts and tensions between a world once taken for granted and the reality one now faces. In further characterizing these, it is important to distinguish between moving from one life structure to another and losing life structure before new structure has taken shape. A grief process involves both. Where there is a pervasive

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loss of structure, things seem curiously *indeterminate*. This is due to a lack of cohesively organized significant possibilities that more usually shape experience, guide thought, and specify and elicit patterns of activity.

Chapter 3 drew on the work of Merleau-Ponty, in order to investigate relationships between bodily and interpersonal experience in grief. In turning to the topic of indeterminacy, his writings are again informative. Aside from comparing the experience of bereavement to phantom limbs and anosognosia, Merleau-Ponty says little about grief. At another point in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, grief is mentioned briefly: "He suffers because he has lost his wife, or he is angry because his watch has been stolen" (1945/2012, 372). This at least indicates an emotional experience of some duration, with a specific object. It is not entirely clear what Merleau-Ponty takes emotions to be or how he would distinguish them from more subtle and ubiquitous experiences of significance. However, he does emphasize that an emotion is not simply a mental event hidden inside a head; it is "not a psychic, internal fact but rather a variation in our relations with others and the world which is expressed in our bodily attitude" (1964b, 53).[1] More specifically, he suggests that the expression of an emotion, including its linguistic expression, is not secondary to an emotional experience but part of it. Words can "express" the "emotional essence" of objects, in ways that are inseparable from how those objects are experienced emotionally (1945/2012, 193). I will endorse a position along these lines with respect to grief. Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that an emotion is a "variation" in our relationship with the social world is also potentially revealing, perhaps marking the contrast that I drew in chapters 2 and 3 between emotional experiences and more mundane experiences of significance. For example, as I walk up the steps to the railway station, go through the ticket barrier, and wait for the train during my regular journey to work, these things are experienced as mattering to me in ways that are mundane, unsurprising, and not at all disruptive. But the subsequent announcement, "we regret that services between Newcastle and York are severely delayed," is experienced differently. It is a disruption of my various projects, a "variation" in how I relate to my surroundings in light of my projects—I will miss my meeting; I will need to catch up on work tomorrow; I ought to notify those people now.

Nevertheless, grief is importantly different from the majority of emotional "variations," which are fleeting and shallow. When faced with the prospect of a delayed train, the import of the situation is fairly limited. The

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disruption envelops only certain aspects of my life, and only in a transient way. It is experienced against the backdrop of a world that remains largely intact. In seeking to further understand this difference, the relevance of Merleau-Ponty's thought is not limited to his brief remarks on grief or, for that matter, emotion. Larger themes, which feature in *Phenomenology of Perception* and are also developed in his later writings, help us to appreciate what is distinctive about profound emotional disturbances. Consider the following passage from his unfinished manuscript, *The Visible and the Invisible*:

> Each perception is the term of an approach, of a series of "illusions" that were not merely simple "thoughts" in the restrictive sense of Being-for-itself and the "merely thought of," but possibilities that could have been, radiations of this unique world that "there is" . . . —and which, as such, never revert to nothingness or to subjectivity as if they had never appeared, but are rather, as Husserl puts it well, "crossed out" or "cancelled" by the "new" reality. (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 41–42)

These reflections relate to a broader position set out in Edmund Husserl's later work, which Merleau-Ponty for the most part endorses and also develops further.[2] According to that position (which I introduced in chapter 2), human experience ordinarily involves the dynamic and holistic actualization of possibilities, in ways that are mostly consistent with anticipation. This is not to say that matters turn out *exactly* as expected. For one thing, what we anticipate has varying degrees of determinacy. For instance, as I walk around the corner to the main road, I anticipate seeing traffic but not a white van. Even so, the van's appearance is entirely consistent with a less determinate set of expectations. So, although I did not anticipate seeing the van, it is neither surprising nor anomalous, unlike an elephant or a Challenger 2 tank. However, we also experience another form of uncertainty, which involves being unsure whether events will unfold in line with one set of expectations or another, competing set of expectations. There can also be doubt over whether an anticipated scenario will arise, even when a specific alternative has not been envisaged. Regardless of whether there is any preceding sense of uncertainty or doubt, subsequent events might be experienced as contrary to what was anticipated. This can take the form of surprise (where something is both unusual and salient) or negation (where something specific, which was expected with confidence, fails to occur). However, experiences of doubt, competing possibilities, surprise, and negation ordinarily arise within the context of a larger pattern that continues to involve unambiguous, confident expectation and unproblematic fulfillment.[3] Perturbations of that

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pattern are only localized anomalies, which run contrary to what Merleau-Ponty would call a general "style" of experience—an overarching *way* of experiencing, whereby things unfold in a cohesive, unproblematic fashion.

When the style of experience takes this form, it instills a sense of completeness and determinacy. Where only one possibility presents itself, with no alternatives to undermine it, that possibility appears in the guise of certainty. Where the possibility is perceptual in nature and concerns the revelation of properties inherent in one's surroundings, it contributes to an experience of those properties as already there and of one's surroundings as complete, bereft of ambiguity. And, when it concerns something that *will* happen, it contributes to a sense of determinacy: only one set of future possibilities is there to be actualized. Merleau-Ponty maintains that we ordinarily take a clearly defined, spatiotemporal world for granted, failing to acknowledge the phenomenological achievements underlying it. Nevertheless, these achievements can be brought to light by reflecting on ways in which the overall style of experience is susceptible to disruption.

We can think of emotional episodes and processes in terms of phenomenological style; they involve experiencing and negotiating potential and actual disturbances of possibilities. In mundane cases, such as the delayed train, these amount to localized perturbations of a more enveloping style that remains intact. However, in profound grief, there are widespread disturbances of anticipatory structure. Two broad types of experience become more prevalent: (a) one continues to anticipate *p*, *q*, and *r* but is repeatedly faced with their negation; (b) previously taken-for-granted patterns of anticipation break down, leading to experiences of conflict and uncertainty. Here, I am concerned primarily with the breakdown of anticipatory structure, having already considered experiences of negation in chapters 2 and 3. We might think of disrupted anticipation in terms of widespread changes in experiential *content*. One ceases to have various experiences of anticipation, the contents of which can be specified by propositions concerning events and their likelihoods: *p* will happen; *q* is likely. However, it is important to acknowledge that widespread disturbance of anticipatory content can also constitute a shift in the overall form or structure of experience, in its style of unfolding. Potential and actual anomalies are so widespread that they are no longer encountered against a backdrop of stability. The style of experience shifts, with uncertainty and doubt taking the place of confident engagement with practically meaningful situations.[4]

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Phenomenological changes of this kind amount to a nonlocalized sense of disorientation, of being lost. A stable arrangement of significant possibilities, integrated into the experiential world, is analogous to a map that identifies paths to follow and paths to avoid. It is through our emotions that we recognize and respond to potential and actual changes to that map. Sometimes, we face a situation where the paths are gone, where things lack the kinds of significance they previously had and no longer relate to one another in the ways they once did. With this, experienced situations cease to specify or guide actions. It is not merely a case of our not *knowing* how to proceed. There is no fact of the matter over whether action *p* or action *q* would be appropriate, as the life structure relative to which competing options are more usually evaluated is absent. A nonlocalized sense of confidence or certainty regarding what is likely to happen and what one could and should do is replaced by a quite different anticipatory style: "I feel like a rudderless boat in a stormy sea with endless time to endure it" (#81).[5]

Granted, even those in the midst of profound grief can still anticipate the practically significant states of affairs that will be actualized when walking up to a supermarket checkout or squeezing toothpaste out of the tube. Even so, larger arrangements of interconnected, unfolding possibilities can implicate the deceased in a host of ways: I did all of those things for him; we did this to sustain and enhance our life together; I could only do this with her help. Consequently, various entities, events, and situations no longer relate to one another in stable, unambiguous ways that reflect long-term projects. That is what I have in mind when referring to heightened *indeterminacy*. Enduring arrangements of practically significant possibilities, which comprise the structure of a life and are experienced in the guise of an organized, unambiguous, predictable, practically meaningful world, give way to phenomenological disorder. Carse (1981, 5) thus describes grief as a "cosmic crisis," during which we "live in a universe that makes no sense," a realm that "has lost its fundamental order." Similar descriptions can be found in many first-person accounts of grief. Having lost a person who was central to one's life, one comes to inhabit a very different *kind* of world, bereft of guiding structure: "The landscape of your life has been demolished and now you are standing in an unrecognisable place. It expands in every direction. You do not know where to go. You are completely alone" (Dooley 2020).

Even if one could somehow let go of the past entirely and experience the world in a manner fully consistent with the death, there would be nowhere

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to go, no path to follow, nothing to be done. Tensions and movements between worlds past and present (as described in chapters 2 and 3) are integral to a process whereby a life structure is reorganized over time rather than abandoned in one go and then somehow rebuilt out of nothing. And there is a balance to be had here—indeterminacy is mitigated through retention of life structure, while a degree of indeterminacy facilitates revision of that structure. It can be added that not all aspects of a person's life will be disrupted to the same degree by bereavement, and some may be relatively unscathed. There will be projects and pastimes in which the deceased was not implicated at all or, at any rate, not implicated to an extent that would compromise their integrity. The scope and profundity of indeterminacy thus varies considerably, depending on the particularities of one's relationship with the deceased. Nevertheless, it is commonplace in bereavement to experience at least some loss of life structure. So, when contrasting the worlds of *before* and *after*, we also need to consider what lies between them. During profound grief, one does not just experience a contrast and conflict between pre- and post-bereavement practical identities. The sense of identity is also eroded; one is neither who one was nor who one will be. With this, there is no fact of the matter concerning what is to be done next, how to continue.[6] Importantly, this aspect of experience is not limited to how the *surrounding world* appears and how it elicits activities. As I will now show, disturbances in the anticipatory structure of experience also envelop linguistic thought, as well as experiences of written and spoken language.

4.2 Impossible Thoughts

I argued in chapter 3 that disturbances in the style of experience are a matter of felt, bodily anticipation. However, this should not be taken to imply that they are wholly distinct from experiences of language and linguistic thought. Granted, the propositional belief that someone is dead can come into conflict with our habitual experience of the world, thus indicating a distinction between the two. But such conflicts can also be integral to the experience of language. An utterance can seem obviously true and yet, at the same time, somehow inadequate to or at odds with one's situation. The relevant experience concerns linguistic meaning itself or—if you prefer—a certain *kind* of linguistic meaning. To account for this, we need to acknowledge that language is inseparable from the overall anticipatory style of experience.

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Given this, it is misleading to think of felt, bodily anticipation and linguistic experience as distinct phenomenological constituents of grief.

Bereavement and other forms of upheaval make salient a subtle kind of *self-referentiality* inherent in much of our everyday thought and talk. Ordinarily, this is something that passes unnoticed. However, the different connotations of words can come apart, in ways that illuminate how linguistic experience relates to wider experience and practice. When words fall short, it is not always a matter of struggling to articulate something, of trying and failing to find the right words. In the absence of such difficulties, words can still be experienced as somehow failing, even as they are uttered. In *How to Do Things with Words*, J. L. Austin (1962) considers how certain utterances "misfire" and fail to have their intended effects. What I seek to describe here involves an *experience of their misfiring*. One might utter exactly the words that one sought to utter and know those words to be true. Even so, they are experienced as conflicting with the realities of one's situation, to the extent that the same proposition might appear true and, at the same time, false.

An author who conveys this aspect of experience especially well is Joyce Carol Oates, in her memoir *A Widow's Story*. At one point, Oates reflects on the sense of impossibility associated with thoughts of collecting her husband's "belongings" from the hospital where he had just died and taking them "home":

> Someone must have instructed me to undertake this task. I am not certain that I would have thought of it myself. The word *belongings* is not my word, I think it is a curious word that sticks to me like a burr.
>
> *Belongings. To take home.*
>
> And *home*, too—this is a curious word.
>
> Strange to consider that there would be a home, now—without my husband—a *home* to which to take his *belongings*. . . .
>
> These toiletry things—that they were *his*, but are now no longer *his*, seems to me very strange.
>
> Now they are *belongings*.
>
> *Your husband's belongings*.
>
> One of the reasons I am moving slowly—perhaps it has nothing to do with being struck on the head by a sledgehammer—is that, with these *belongings*, I have nowhere to go except *home*. This *home*—without my husband—is not possible for me to consider. (Oates 2011, 64–65)

As these passages illustrate, tensions and conflicts are not limited to the experiences conveyed *by* one's words; the words themselves seem somehow

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wrong too. "Home" is a "curious word," embodying some form of tension. But what does that tension consist of? Kirsten Jacobson (2009, 361) suggests that the sense of being at "home" resembles and is also intermingled with how we experience our own bodies; both contribute to an orientation through which we engage with the world. In addition, home is somewhere to which we can retreat when required—a place of "stability." Now, suppose that home is, among other things, a place where we can relax and unburden ourselves. While one person might do this by listening to music and drinking alcohol, another might cook and read books. However, a common experience of *being at home* is compatible with these different life structures and can thus be characterized in fairly general terms: home is the place where most of one's belongings are located, where one can rest, prepare for the day, relax, feel safe, and so forth. However, in referring specifically to "my home," there is also a sense of its particularity, of how it relates to the unique structure of one's own life. In saying "I am going home now," the most salient aspect of doing so may be returning to a particular person and acting in ways that imply their actual or potential presence.

Given that the experience of *being at home* can depend on one's relationship with a particular person, it can be affected significantly by bereavement: "If you live with someone, it's that presence, like pop the kettle on, . . . the laughter at the TV, or something you see. Then total silence, I felt at first like I'd gone deaf" (#113). In thinking or uttering "I am going home now," the bereaved person may be struck by the impossibility of certain things. On some occasions, this will involve a kind of forgetting; one slides into habitual patterns of activity and thought, only to then recall that things are different now. However, this does not capture other experiences, where a feeling of alienation from the utterance arises even as it is spoken. In a way, going home still makes sense; I can still return to my private residence. In thinking "I am going home," the same thought points both to this and to other possibilities that no longer apply. So, there is a sense of tension, conflict, even contradiction. Yes, one is going home. But, in another way, one cannot go home anymore. Thoughts of "home" that once included these various connotations in a harmonious way now seem oddly decoupled from the world, pointing to possibilities that no longer have a place:

> "We" becomes "I." I still find it hard to say "my house," for example, it is "our house." Every single thing that you used to do has changed. You go to work, but come home to an empty house with nobody to discuss the day with. Preparing

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> something to eat is a means of keeping your body going, rather than enjoyment. Watching TV is a way to pass time, rather than something you would discuss or comment on together. (#108)

We can account for experiences of linguistic incongruity by acknowledging that, when words relate—however indirectly—to patterns of practically meaningful possibilities, they are also *experienced as* doing so. In much the same way that a cup or a computer might be experienced as mattering, as harboring significant possibilities relative to a wider context, spoken and written words frequently relate to one's life structure. Importantly, this kind of *self-referentiality* is not exclusive to explicitly indexical words such as "home." In principle, it can extend to almost any utterance. Take the example of going to the cinema. In contrast to thinking "it is possible for an unspecified person to go to the cinema," when one thinks "I could go to the cinema," the prospect of doing so may also point to that of going with a particular person, of sharing popcorn, of laughing together, of talking about the film afterward. As one contemplates "the cinema," affirms that one will go, or responds to an invitation to go, such possibilities can be experienced *as* absent. One is still able to go to the cinema; the proposition makes sense and also happens to be true. But doing so no longer relates to one's life in the manner it once did; a certain *way* of going to the cinema is no longer possible. The tension between past and present is embodied in an utterance that points to both at once. Such tensions could occur due to the incompatibility between two practically meaningful worlds in which words operate, one including the deceased and the other not. However, the experience of strangeness, lack, and even apparent contradiction that I have described here relates more closely to indeterminacy. A life structure once associated with being at home has not been replaced by something new that is equally consistent with feeling at home. Instead, that structure is lacking, accounting for the sense that one cannot "go home."[7]

It is difficult, on the basis of the publicly available content of an utterance, to determine whether or not it is likely to involve an experience of this nature. Suppose that two people both utter the proposition "The Eiffel Tower is in Paris." For one of them, the Eiffel Tower has no significant connotations. They passed by it once, looked up at it, and may even have taken the lift to the top. But it has no current significance in the context of their life, and neither does it feature significantly in their biography. For the other person, in contrast, the Eiffel Tower was where they first met their spouse,

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the place to which they returned in order to mark their most recent wedding anniversary. How can it be that same Eiffel Tower when everything is so different now? How does it make sense for that place to endure, with him gone? As this example suggests, the self-referential dimension relates both to a current life structure and to a rich biography connected with it. So, one could utter all manner of things and find that they no longer *mean* quite what they did before. They do not point to the same possibilities, or they point to possibilities that have been negated. Having lost a partner, words such as "home," "dinner," "holiday," "friends," "walk," "gardening," and so forth may be riddled with tensions. It is *our* home; *we* always eat dinner together; *we* go on holiday; they are *our* friends; *we* are working on the garden; those are the walks *we* enjoy most. In a general sense of the term "home," it is true that I am going home. I am returning to my private residence rather than someone else's. Yet it is not my home anymore. I am having dinner at home now, but how can that be when it is not *our* dinner? I am going to see friends, but how can I when they are no longer *our* friends? The point applies equally to other types of bereavement. When possibilities that were central to one's life no longer apply, associated words may be experienced differently. How can that still be *the school* without her? How is that still *his bedroom*? Am I really driving to *my parents' house*? How could we be going to that place again for *our family holiday*?

Linguistic tensions can be especially pronounced when talking of the body or ashes of the deceased and their location. What might be referred to as *that individual* is at the same time something that makes salient the person's nonexistence: "The ambivalence of language. After his death it was obvious that 'he' wasn't in his body, yet to an extent it was still him, as were his ashes" (#192). This conflict can also apply more specifically to the person's name. To use that name in referring to a body, and to identify the person's location with where the body resides, is to talk in a manner that is not straightforwardly false. Nevertheless, the very object to which one refers comprises a negation of all those possibilities associated with the name, possibilities with which that name remains imbued. Present-tense talk of this kind can therefore be wrought with tension and ambiguity, involving statements that might strike one as true and yet self-contradictory—he is what he is not, and he resides where he does not.

Experiences of this nature are not unique to grief over the death of a person. They are associated with profound and pervasive disturbances of

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life structure, which can arise due to a range of causes. The case of grief thus draws attention to a much wider phenomenon: a distinctive way in which utterances are sometimes experienced as lacking, as conflicting with a situation without being false.[8] To further analyze this aspect of experience, I will return to Merleau-Ponty, whose approach to language serves both to accommodate and to illuminate what is involved.

As I understand Merleau-Ponty, he is proposing that linguistic experience itself has what Husserl calls a "horizonal" structure. As mentioned in chapter 2, Husserl maintains that, when we encounter something perceptually, our sense of *what it is* and our sense *that it is* both depend on our experience of various interrelated possibilities involving that entity. These possibilities do not adhere to things in isolation from their surroundings; experience as a whole has a cohesive horizonal structure. Merleau-Ponty suggests that this applies equally to linguistic experience. Our words and utterances are experienced as pointing to possibilities involving further utterances, thoughts, perceptual experiences, and activities.[9] Hence, words are not spoken, written, and read in isolation from our wider engagement with a world of possibilities; they are entwined with our practice. According to Merleau-Ponty, words can relate to possibilities in two importantly different ways. He distinguishes language as a "sedimented" or habitually entrenched institution from a form of authentic "speech" that somehow transcends the familiar possibilities associated with words, giving rise to new meanings. In his late (and incomplete) work, *The Prose of the World*, the two are contrasted as follows:

> We may say that there are two languages. First, there is language after the fact, or language as an institution, which effaces itself in order to yield the meaning which it conveys. Second, there is the language which creates itself in its expressive acts, which sweeps me on from the signs toward meaning—sedimented language and speech. (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 10)

Here and elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty draws inspiration from his interpretation of Saussure.[10] However, something approximating the distinction is also present in his earlier work, prior to any engagement with Saussure. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, he also distinguishes a "sedimented" language, which demands no effort of expression or comprehension, from a speech involved in the creation of new meanings (1945/2012, 202). To clarify how the two differ, we can draw on the comparison with perceptual experience. The horizon of a familiar entity such as a drinking glass

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is shaped by habitual activities involving that entity and/or entities of its type. Given this, the possibilities associated with it remain fairly consistent over time. Likewise, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the possibilities attached to our utterances are ordinarily fixed, for the most part, by habit and convention. Nevertheless, when we speak or write, familiar words are sometimes used in ways that open up new possibilities. A familiar entity taken out of context, or an unfamiliar entity placed in a familiar context, can point to possibilities that differ from the norm, in ways that are often experienced as disruptive. For instance, a work of art may combine habitual patterns with something incongruous, shaking up and—in so doing—making explicit practical meanings that are more usually taken for granted. Similarly, certain uses of language deviate from established arrangements of possibilities and evoke new ones.[11] My suggestion is that grief can involve involuntary transitions from "language" to "speech." When there is pervasive indeterminacy, what we have is a distinctive variant of speech, where words are dislodged from their usual contexts without evoking new possibilities for coherent patterns of thought or activity.

In contemplating the experience and comprehension of "speech," Merleau-Ponty indicates explicitly that we encounter linguistic possibilities in a manner that resembles practically engaged perceptual experience. Skillful, perceptual activity involves coming to adopt an optimal orientation relative to an object of perception, through which possibilities are resolved and integrated so as to reveal its nature. By analogy, consider how we might come to understand an original philosophical work. Here too, Merleau-Ponty suggests, we strive for an optimal resolution whereby its various possibilities coalesce into a distinctive, unambiguous arrangement:

> Even though only *Abschattungen* of the signification are given thematically, the fact is that once a certain point in discourse has been passed the *Abschattungen*, caught up in the movement of discourse outside of which they are nothing, suddenly contract into a single signification. And then we feel that *something has been said*—just as we perceive a thing once a minimum of sensory messages has been exceeded. (Merleau-Ponty 1964a, 91)[12]

This is not to be construed in terms of rendering something *fully* determinate. Even when language is resolved in this way, an original work, whether spoken or written, continues to point beyond itself. In the same way that perceived objects always point to further possibilities and are "inexhaustible, never entirely given," "what is expressed is never completely

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expressed" (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 37). Hence, in comprehending speech, we engage with possibilities that remain to some degree indeterminate. This incompleteness is not merely epistemic. What is said does not remain indeterminate only because we do not *know* the contents of someone else's thoughts, or even our own thoughts, in their entirety. Rather, the content is itself indeterminate, pointing to something further that is not fully specified. So, although we have a sense of where our thoughts are taking us, their destination often remains hazy; we only recognize exactly where we were heading once we get there. Furthermore, completion need not be an exclusively first-person matter. For instance, when contemplating an original work by another philosopher, we might ourselves seek to actualize possibilities inherent in it, sometimes in ways that their author did not foresee or even could not have foreseen. This is how Merleau-Ponty (1964a, 160) conceives of his own intellectual debt to Husserl:

> At the end of Husserl's life there is an unthought-of element in his works which is wholly his and yet opens out on something else. To think is not to possess the objects of thought; it is to use them to mark out a realm to think about which we therefore are not yet thinking about.

Merleau-Ponty seeks to "evoke this unthought-of element in Husserl's thought," to actualize possibilities that are there in Husserl's thought, although not explicitly recognized by Husserl (Merleau-Ponty 1964a, 160). To inhabit a system of philosophical possibilities in this way is not just to grasp what is already there but to embark on paths toward which it points.

Although some uses of words disrupt established arrangements and point to new possibilities, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that much of what we say and write is dictated largely by convention, running along familiar trails laid out by habitual, shared norms. Our "language," in contrast to our "speech," is imbued only with the usual, generic possibilities:

> We live in a world where speech is already *instituted*. We possess in ourselves already formed significations for all these banal words [*paroles*]. They only give rise in us to second-order thoughts, which are in turn translated into other words that require no genuine effort of expression from us, and that will demand no effort of comprehension from our listeners. (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 189)

Hence, as with the possibilities offered by a stable, cohesively organized experiential world, the possibilities of language are constrained by established structure. Furthermore, the two are inextricable. Our words, like our experiences and activities, are embedded within contexts of practice that

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presuppose fairly stable arrangements of projects and values. Consequently, they are disrupted by forms of experience that impact upon the intelligibility or sustainability of those arrangements. In the case of grief, what is yet to accommodate the loss thus extends beyond nonconceptual, bodily anticipation. The rupture envelops linguistic thought as well, which is equally integrated into the overarching style of experience. Conceiving of grief as a dynamic process that envelops world experience, language, thought, and activity is consistent with Merleau-Ponty's assertion that an emotion is not simply a thought or a feeling but a "total act of consciousness," a "mode of our relation to the entire world" (Merleau-Ponty 1964c, 61).

It is arguable that a distinction akin to that between "language" and "speech" also applies to the wider structure of an emotional experience, in a way that further illuminates the phenomenology of grief. I have suggested that, unlike shallow, episodic emotional disruptions that arise against the backdrop of a largely intact world, grief involves a change in how we experience and relate to the world as a whole. However, this contrast can be further refined by distinguishing between emotional responses to disruption that *themselves* depart from established structure and others that do not. Drawing inspiration from Merleau-Ponty's contrast between language and speech, Kym Maclaren distinguishes between "emotional clichés" and "authentic passions." In her words, clichés involve "familiar routes and enticing possibilities sketched out by the individual's habits within the sensed situation," while authentic passions involve the "realization of unforeseen meanings within the world and new ways of becoming oneself" (Maclaren 2011, 56–58). Both types of emotional experience involve disturbances of habitual arrangements. But, unlike authentic emotions, clichés involve responses to these disturbances that unfold in familiar ways, akin to scripted performances or routines.

To illustrate the distinction, Maclaren (2011, 60–62) turns to profound grief, which she regards as an authentic passion. It involves, she says, the "crumbling" of a world, which can "no longer exist with the meanings that it had," the "*breakdown* of our habitual negotiation of the world." However, the kind of indeterminacy associated with grief is not attributable solely to its being an "authentic passion"; it stems from something more specific. For Maclaren, an authentic passion is uninhibited by constraining structure and thus harbors the potential to reshape a world that is more usually presupposed. It can be added that grief takes this form because it disrupts

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the very setting within which it arises. Full acknowledgment of loss *implies* the alteration of a world within which it is initially experienced as occurring, undermining certain shared habits and norms that might otherwise have shaped its unfolding. Hence, there is a further distinction to be drawn between authentic emotions, which depart from established paths, and a narrower category of emotions (such as grief), which remove those paths.

Where grief is concerned, we should not think of clichés and authentic emotions as mutually exclusive. While undergoing a profound phenomenological disturbance, one might seek out familiar patterns wherever possible (including familiar emotional patterns), sometimes with the support of other people. So, certain clichés may turn out to be symptomatic of authentic passions, perhaps integral to their expression. The same point applies to authentic "speech." Some familiar linguistic paths will remain largely or wholly intact, offering a degree of respite from indeterminacy. There is also a distinction to be drawn between speech that offers new possibilities and speech that does this *by* making salient the loss of a context within which the relevant words would more usually be spoken. Words need not simply misfire; their misfiring can be used *in order to* make explicit the loss of their usual context. As illustrated by the earlier quotation from Joyce Carol Oates's *A Widow's Story*, words such as "home" and "belongings" can be employed in ways that explicitly acknowledge, convey, and evoke a loss of the familiar.

When interpreting the language of grief, it is important to keep in mind that it operates in these different ways. Words can disrupt familiar patterns, in a manner that may or may not be conducive to the formation of new life structure. At the same time, established linguistic arrangements, integral to those areas of life that remain sustainable, are a source of continuing stability. The utterance "I am going home" could involve recognition of and engagement with indeterminacy (when one is reflecting on its strangeness), retreating from indeterminacy (when one did not live with the deceased and the sense of "home" is largely unaffected), or an attempt to reimpose structure (as when one seeks to instill, via the utterance, something that remains of home or, alternatively, a new sense of home).[13]

The suggestion that language works in these ways looks all the more plausible if, like Merleau-Ponty, we reject clear boundaries between language and thought, as well as between emotions and their expression (including their linguistic expression). According to Merleau-Ponty, the two relationships are similar in kind. Something does not first arise in its entirety and only then

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generate something else, at least not always. There is a tendency within an emotional feeling *toward* its expression. Furthermore, that expression may be partly constitutive of the emotion; it completes rather than follows it. Expressive completion can render one's emotion more determinate, perhaps even making it the *kind* of emotional experience it is. Sometimes, it is only by expressing my anger that I come to recognize that it is anger I feel, that I am angry with you, that I am angry about what you did.[14] Similarly, Merleau-Ponty suggests that language not only expresses preformed thoughts; it sometimes *completes* them. In the absence of linguistic expression, the thought is not something that can be introspected and pinned down precisely:

> Thought is nothing "inner," nor does it exist outside the world and outside of words. What tricks us here, what makes us believe in a thought that could exist for itself prior to expression, are the already constituted and already expressed thoughts that we can silently recall to ourselves and by which we give ourselves the illusion of an inner life. But in fact, this supposed silence is buzzing with words—this inner life is an inner language. (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 188–189)

Although it might seem that we already have the thought prior to its expression, this is due to the activity of inner speech, which, like speaking and writing, is partly constitutive of thinking. Furthermore, the thought only appears fully formed in those instances where it has already been articulated via established "language." Where "speech" is concerned, this sense of a thought coming ready-made is lacking. Instead, we experience thought in the making.

Thus, by drawing on Merleau-Ponty, we arrive at the view that language, thought, feeling, and world experience are phenomenologically inseparable. All are integrated into the anticipatory structure of experience, something that has an overarching *style*. This approach, I have suggested, enables us to describe and analyze aspects of grief that are otherwise elusive and difficult to comprehend.

4.3 Where Words Point

When a phenomenon is difficult to pin down and explicate, as with linguistic experience in grief, it can help to approach it from more than one perspective. So, having drawn on Merleau-Ponty, I will now turn to William James. Despite working in different philosophical traditions and using different terminologies, the two philosophers develop conceptions of linguistic meaning

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that are largely complementary and, I suggest, mutually illuminating. Like Merleau-Ponty, James identifies a certain type, or perhaps aspect, of linguistic meaning, consisting in a sense of our words as *pointing* somewhere—toward possibilities that might be actualized. One important element of James's approach is his conception of "pragmatism," both as a philosophical method and as an account of meaning and truth:

> The pragmatic method . . . is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. (James 1907/1981, 26)

Put simply, James identifies meaning with practical utility. However, he has a very permissive conception of the latter. In order to mean something different by *p* and *q*, all that is required is their having different implications at least somewhere, in practice or in thought. This is also the kernel of James's conception of truth. Truth, he suggests, is not a matter of static "agreement" or correspondence between an idea (or, as one would say nowadays, a "proposition") and a state of affairs. Instead, truth is dynamic; it is something that "*happens* to an idea." James further proposes that what is true is simply what is useful to us: "The possession of true thoughts means everywhere the possession of invaluable instruments of action" (1907/1981, 92–93). There are straightforward and compelling objections to this claim, involving various scenarios where something is clearly either true or false, without there being any practical consequences one way or the other. Nevertheless, James's position is more subtle than it seems. He is not concerned with our assessments of particular propositions as true or false but with our underlying grasp or sense of what it is for something to be true or false. This is presupposed by our assessments of specific truth claims; their intelligibility depends on it. And, James insists, for the distinction between truth and falsehood to be intelligible at all, for us to be able to even conceive of these contrasting possibilities, we must already inhabit a world that matters to us. Our sense of "truth" is inextricable from the appreciation that something *could* have significant consequences somewhere:

> To "agree" in the widest sense with a reality *can only mean to be guided either straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed*. (James 1907/1981, 96)

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James refers to "truth," "belief," "meaning," and "conception" without much sensitivity toward potential differences between them. One could therefore object that his account does not in fact concern *x* at all (insert whichever term you like), but instead *y* (insert another). I am not concerned with whether he captures all aspects of truth or all notions of truth that might be identified, and the same goes for meaning. What he does provide, though, is a helpful way of understanding conflicted experiences of language that arise in grief and other contexts. James identifies a distinctive *kind* of meaning, which accounts for how we can recognize the meaning (in one sense) of a given proposition, and also assent to it, but at the same time find that proposition lacking in meaning (in another sense) and consequently assent to it with a peculiar feeling of tension or conflict. To see this, we need to combine—as James does—his pragmatism with aspects of his later "radical empiricism."

In the essay "A World of Pure Experience," James proposes that there is more to meaning something by an utterance than its actually having certain consequences elsewhere. In addition, we *experience* our words and thoughts as pointing somewhere. If you like, he is advocating a kind of *phenomenological pragmatism*. Consistent with Merleau-Ponty's approach, it seems that differences in the practical sphere that render one's utterance meaningful are integral to what Husserl would call the "horizon" of the utterance. James finds traditional forms of empiricism lacking, in their failure to acknowledge that experience incorporates relations and, more specifically, temporal relations. There is, he says, a sense of where things are heading, of consistency with what has gone before, and of actual and anticipated completion. The suggestion is not that we only take things to be true or experience things as meaningful when we actualize all of the possibilities toward which they point. Instead, James proposes that the meaningfulness of an utterance always involves some sense of what its fulfillment *would* involve, where it *would* lead us. An additional appreciation of its truth involves recognizing that this path *could* indeed be followed. The utterance in question might be far removed from one's current engagement with the surrounding world. Even so, there remains the feeling that one could find one's way back from it to a practically significant world, albeit indirectly.

Hence, according to James, the meaning of an utterance is not fully grasped at the time of its occurrence; it is not somehow *contained* within it. And to hold something as true is also to sense that there is a route to be

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followed. Truth only comes into being when that route is actually followed, a process that can involve a number of steps. In James's words, there are "intermediary experiences (possible, if not actual) of continuously developing progress, and, finally, of fulfilment, when the sensible percept, which is the object, is reached" (James 1912, 60). Much of our discourse, he suggests, amounts to a semi-autonomous realm, where we wander far from immediate experience. Nevertheless, our thought and talk remain tethered to the practically meaningful world we inhabit. For example, when thinking of Memorial Hall (at Harvard), he says that "it is only when our idea of the Hall has actually terminated in the percept that we know 'for certain' that from the beginning it was truly cognitive of *that*." The percept thus has a "retroactive validating power," turning us from "virtual" to "actual" knowers (1912, 68). For the most part, James adds, we do not progress from the language to the percept. Nevertheless, although much of our discourse is removed from practice, the system as a whole is ordinarily tied to the world by an organized, but not fully determinate, arrangement of possibilities. This terminates—ultimately—in the world of practically engaged perceptual experience. James draws a financial analogy (as he is fond of doing):

> Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs "pass," so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass so long as nobody refuses them. But this all points to direct face-to-face verifications somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever. (James 1907/1981, 95)

Another way of putting it would be to say that our everyday talk involves a kind of nonlocalized confidence, a sense that we could find our way back to the world if we needed to, like a confident swimmer who knows that she will always be able to return to shore. A comparison can be drawn here with the overarching style of experience described by Merleau-Ponty. Drawing on Husserl, Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012, 359) refers to this style in terms of perceptual "faith" and "primordial opinion." But it is not a matter of taking any number of things to be the case or to be true, in the guise of propositional beliefs or perceptual experiences with localized contents. As we have seen, it instead consists of an organized, cohesive pattern of confident anticipation and fulfillment. In turning to James, we can add that *perceptual faith* is inextricable from a more specific *linguistic faith*, a sense that our words ultimately point back to practically engaged perceptual experience in a cohesive, reliable way. With profound disturbances of life structure, this

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linguistic faith falters too; words are no longer integrated into the experiential world in a coherent way, pointing instead to conflicting possibilities.

The indeterminacy of linguistic meaning (or, at least, a certain kind of "meaning") implied by this account might strike one as implausible. Surely, we can fully grasp which states of affairs would make a proposition true and also what is meant by that proposition, without actualizing the possibilities that it somehow points toward. In response, it should first be noted that at least *some* experiences do appear consistent with James's account; we do not know quite where we are going until we get there and the sense of agreement consists, first and foremost, in a kind of temporal completion. Consider tip-of-the-tongue experiences. On one interpretation, the word we sought was there all along, shut in a cupboard that had to be opened. On another, the word that eventually surfaces is consistent with a less determinate anticipatory structure, which pointed to that word without containing it. And take the case of hearing a melody for the first time, not knowing what exactly is coming next, but recognizing that what one now hears is consistent with what was anticipated. Another example is that of the student who struggles with an essay deadline and says, "It was all in my head, but I couldn't get it down on paper." Perhaps a more plausible conclusion to draw in many instances is that it was not there at all. What the student actually had *in mind* was a more inchoate sense of a path to be followed and where it would lead, a path that turned out to be incomplete or absent. Often, we find out what we are thinking by pursuing possibilities and seeing what, if anything, crystallizes in spoken or written words. Of course, the majority of our linguistic experiences are not like this. However, by drawing on Merleau-Ponty's distinction between language and speech, we can see how a wider sense of determinacy and completeness could stem from the predominance of established language, which follows paths that have already been laid out. Our unwavering faith in the ability to follow those paths is such that the "meaning" appears fully present all along; no contrary possibilities present themselves. However, when those paths are no longer there, a different *kind* of linguistic thought occurs.

The objection remains that what we have here is surely not a comprehensive account of all those phenomena encompassed by the terms "meaning" and "truth." However, nothing is lost by conceding that. All I wish to claim is that James succeeds in identifying a certain kind of *experience of meaning*, which corresponds to what is disrupted in grief and other forms

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of upheaval.[15] In one sense at least, terms do lose their meanings and, with this, our grasp of certain things being the case is also eroded. One might state repeatedly that *x* is the case, while remaining unable to instill a feeling that this is so. How could it be the case that I am going *home*, when the prospect of doing so seems somehow incoherent or even unintelligible? The grieving person still understands the meanings of relevant propositions and may also acknowledge that they are true. But what is lacking is a certain *experience* of meaning and truth, of their connecting or being able to connect in the right way to a significant world. The path to the world is unclear, obstructed, or absent. With this, words lose their grip on things.

4.4 Experiences of Time

Phenomenological changes of the kind considered in this chapter can also be described in terms of temporal experience. This is not to say that they happen to involve the sense of time *as well*. Rather, what I have referred to in terms of phenomenological style, indeterminacy, and tensions between worlds can all be couched in terms of how time is experienced. Hence, in considering temporal experience, we acquire an additional perspective on the phenomenology of grief, as opposed to identifying a separate ingredient of grief. Alterations of temporal experience in grief encompass both the immediate sense of *flow* or *passage* and a longer-term sense of order and duration. Bereavement's effect on the sense of time is attributable in part to the complex temporal organization of a human life. Some nonhuman animals behave in ways that appear consistent with grief (King 2013). Although there may be a sense in which they can indeed be said to grieve, the aspects of grief that I have focused on in this and the preceding chapters all relate to something distinctively human: a dynamic life structure consisting of cohesively organized values, commitments, projects, and pastimes. This often involves pursuing significant possibilities that stretch many years into the future, which relate in intricate ways to past activities, achievements, and failures. The kinds of experiences that I have described are rendered possible by this structure, its fragility, and the extent to which it can come to depend on our relationships with particular individuals.[16] Without it, there could not be a temporally extended phenomenological disturbance involving wide-ranging disintegration of life structure and conflicts between worlds past and present.

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We should be wary of endorsing any straightforward generalizations concerning grief and the sense of time. Grief processes encompass a wide range of experiences, including different forms of temporal experience. Furthermore, people's experiences of grief differ in various ways. For instance, insofar as temporal experience in grief relates to life structure, it is likely to vary markedly depending on—among other things—the age of the bereaved. An experience of indeterminacy is compatible with various changes in the sense of time. In considering these, it is important to distinguish the following aspects of temporal experience: (a) an ongoing experience of transition or flow; (b) a sense of temporal order and duration; and (c) a sense of past, present, and future as clearly distinct from one another.

First of all, let us consider the experience of temporal flow. This consists, at least partly, of an interplay between anticipation and fulfillment. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, I have suggested that world experience ordinarily involves a certain overall style of anticipation, whereby possibilities are actualized in ways that are largely consistent with what was anticipated. The experience of temporal transition is altered when a great many things cease to matter as they once did. Things still change, but new states of affairs no longer differ in practically meaningful ways from earlier states of affairs. So, one moment does not stand out from another and the transition from future to past is not marked to the same extent by the actualization of *significant* possibilities. This also alters the longer-term sense of temporal duration. One does not anticipate the next moment being different in a consequential way; one does not experience it as different; and one does not remember the recent past as relevantly different—nothing stands out. Hence, as is sometimes said, "time doesn't mean anything at the moment" (#162); "time didn't seem to matter" (#174). A diminished experience of *meaningful* change, enveloping both current experience and recent autobiographical memory, is sometimes described in terms of stasis:

> The feeling of progress that you have goes when life is interrupted by the death of the person you love the most. Moving forward stops. Stasis sets in. Time merges disconcertingly, slowing to nothing. (Rosenfeld 2020, 242)

The sense of being "stuck" in time is especially pronounced when the rest of the world seems to carry on regardless. As discussed in chapter 3, it may appear that things still change in meaningful ways, but only for other people. This amounts to an experience of being dislodged from consensus

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time: "I felt like I was trapped looking out of a window watching other people's lives go by but mine had stopped on that day" (#54); "couldn't be everyone just carries on when my world shattered" (#44). A closely related theme is that the days, weeks, months, or years seem to have passed by quickly, as there is nothing to fill them with or distinguish them from one another. Yet, with a diminished sense of meaningful change, it also seems that one's present situation has lasted a long time, as nothing distinguishes it from the moments preceding it: "Time seems endless now, the days last forever, but at the same time the years are going by" (#86). In addition, one may anticipate only more of the same. Hence, the same experience can be described in terms of time speeding up, slowing down, or lacking structure: "The first six months were long, but looking back I barely remember what happened in them. Like time extending with nothing to keep it in shape" (#191). With the erosion of life structure, even events that do matter, including the death itself, lack a fixed place in a stable biography: "My concept of time is very mixed up. Sometimes it feels like a lifetime ago, then others it feels like yesterday" (#55); "I can't order time and it's all meaningless" (#45). A collapse of significant projects that once provided temporal organization can also involve erosion of the phenomenological boundaries between past, present, and future. The difference between them no longer matters or, at least, no longer matters as much as it did or in the ways it once did: "Grief reconfigures time, its length, its texture, its function" (Barnes 2013, 84).

The themes of a diminished sense of passage and of being somehow outside of time are both prominent in Denise Riley's book, *Time Lived without Its Flow*. Riley describes a profound transformation of her world that persisted for approximately three years after the death of her adult son. She focuses on an experience of time as bereft of "flow." This, she writes, involved a "sensation of having been lifted clean out of habitual time"; the "sensation of living outside time" (Riley 2012, 10, 45). One might interpret this in terms of losing a life structure required for engaging with a realm of meaningful, shared possibilities and their unfolding. However, Riley's experience is not so much a matter of exclusion as of indifference. Consensus time no longer matters. And, in the context of her own life, temporal transition and the differences between past, present, and future do not matter either. She attributes this to a pronounced and enduring connection with her son, which detaches her from a realm where he no longer resides and involves sharing in his inability to actualize new possibilities. Hence,

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although what Riley describes is consistent with the sense of indeterminacy discussed in this chapter, it should not be attributed exclusively to it (a point to which I will return in chapter 6).[17]

Another form of stasis experience is that identified by Merleau-Ponty, in comparing grief and phantom limbs (see chapter 3). In both cases, he maintains that we can never fully *succeed* in preserving an impossible world in the face of loss. Such a world can only be sustained by avoiding the actualization of new and significant possibilities that might threaten its structure. We thus come to inhabit a world without openness and dynamism, one that no longer accommodates the possibility of certain kinds of meaningful temporal transition. As Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012, 85) puts it, "personal time is arrested." Given that such an experience involves retention of an impoverished world rather than loss of that world, it is to be distinguished from forms of temporal experience that arise when indeterminacy predominates.

Loss of life structure can involve a *fragmentation* of temporal experience. Certain "pockets" of experience still point to a person's potential presence, while others accommodate the loss and no longer include such possibilities. With this, there is a degree of temporal ambiguity; something is not firmly established as past and continues to appear as a competing present. These tensions also extend to autobiographical memory. Past events often continue to matter to us insofar as they relate in significant ways to our current values, projects, and possibilities—it was important because it allowed us to do *p*, which led to *q*, without which we would not be doing *r* together now. So, consigning something to the past is not merely a matter of identifying its place in a sequence of events. There is also the question of where it led, whether and how possibilities radiating from it themselves became past. Autobiographical memory can therefore involve a similar ambiguity to the present, with events belonging to different, conflicting patterns of unfolding. The sense of *when* something occurred is disrupted, to the extent that this involves its occupying a meaningful place in one's life, relative to various other events.

I have characterized the disruption of life structure principally in terms of *losing* possibilities. However, it is also consistent with another form of experience, where one continues to experience things as significant, but in ways that are untethered from any structuring framework of values and projects. Past and future are of little consequence; there is just the allure of the present. Robert Romanyshyn (1999, 24, 33) describes something like this in terms of the *reverie* of grief:

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> In grief and the long slow process of mourning, the plotlines of my life were undone, the past that was and the future that no longer would be were dissolved. I could not have imagined, however, that from this dissolution of personal time there would arise reveries of origins and destinies. . . . Reverie, like grief, is a way of haunting the world, a kind of consciousness which has slipped from its usual moorings of everyday worries and concerns; it drifts in a mood of detachment among the things of the world.

A decontextualized, drifting fascination with things amounts to a distinctive way of experiencing time—without any connection to a temporally organized life, nothing distinguishes the present pragmatically from what is past, anticipated, or imagined. However, experiencing things as significant in an unstructured way is equally compatible with a pronounced sense of what is missing and a felt need to reestablish life structure. Consider the following passage:

> My mind struggled to build across the gap, make a new and inhabitable world. The problem was that it had nothing to work with. There was no partner, no children, no home. No nine-to-five job either. So it grabbed anything it could. It was desperate, and it read off the world wrong. I began to notice strange connections between things. Things of no import burst into extraordinary significance. (Macdonald 2014, 16)

In both cases, experiences of significance are unconstrained by a backdrop of values and projects, resembling what is referred to elsewhere as "salience dysregulation" (Ratcliffe and Broome 2022). It is debatable whether such experiences should be construed as making a positive or negative contribution to the process of reorientation. On the one hand, "strange connections" might dislodge familiar organization in such a way that new patterns can form. On the other hand, they could disrupt the establishment of new structure by exacerbating disorder.

What I have referred to as "indeterminacy" is therefore compatible with a range of subtly different changes in the structure of temporal experience. In all cases, though, the association with an altered sense of time is not incidental. To feel lost in this manner is also to feel lost in relation to time.

4.5 Grief and Rationality

A pervasive sense of indeterminacy interferes with the capacity for rational thought. Nevertheless, it need not involve *irrationality*, at least not in a way

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that could be contrasted with an alternative, rational response to loss. Instead, it is an important aspect of the temporal organization of human experience and thought. Much of our thinking occurs against the backdrop of a preestablished world with a fairly consistent, stable organization. However, we do not and indeed cannot think and act exclusively *within* these confines. The experiential world is always in flux, usually in subtle, localized ways that do not compromise its overall integrity. Other disruptions, however, are more profound and pervasive. In recognizing and responding to them, language and thought cannot operate in quite the same way. As suggested by Merleau-Ponty, there is a difference between language that presupposes familiar arrangements and another kind of language (or "speech") that either elicits or participates in their disruption. We thus saw how there are important differences between how the word "home" is used in the habitual, unproblematic utterance "I'm off home now" and in expressing and comprehending a loss of life structure—"I'm going home now, but it's not home, not without her." Vulnerability to such phenomenological disturbances is unavoidable for a being with a complex, dynamic life structure, which depends for its integrity on contingent, fragile relationships with other beings.

It is through our emotional lives that the structure of an experiential world presupposed by much of our thinking is responsive to the changing realities of our situation. In experiencing profound emotional upheaval, we confront the limitations of mundane, practically oriented rational thought. Relationships of implication, along the lines of "if I do *p*, then *q* will be achieved, thus contributing to *r*," break down to varying degrees. As with "home," numerous instances of *p*, *q*, and *r* will have a self-referential aspect, such that the relations between them depend on circumstances particular to one's own life. Bereft of those circumstances, one no longer "means" quite the same things by them, and so they no longer relate to one another in the ways they previously did. When numerous relationships of implication that were presupposed by thought and practice cease to hold, there is no way of determining how to proceed. It is analogous to writing "1, 2, 3, and 4," only then to be struck by the revelation that nothing specifies what comes next; the rules do not apply anymore.[18]

A comprehensive account of what it is to think rationally ought to accommodate both times of stability and times of upheaval. It will not do to construe rational thought solely in terms of the former, with no account

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of how we do or should engage with the latter. But this point is easily missed, if emotional experiences such as grief are conceived of as responses to events that occur *within* an otherwise intact world and the achievement of having a meaningful world at all is simply presupposed by the enquirer.

If the profundity of grief is not acknowledged, then an aspect of our lives that is inevitable will instead appear avoidable and also, perhaps, irrational in one or another way. For instance, Gustafson (1989) takes grief to consist centrally in the belief that someone is dead and the desire that they not be dead. Given that it involves a belief-contrary desire, it turns out to be inherently irrational. However, such characterizations do not capture the kinds of tensions that arise between certain propositional beliefs and the wider structure of experience. Furthermore, as we will see in chapters 5 and 6, the "desire" that someone not be dead does not come close to acknowledging the nuances and diversity of interpersonal experience and relatedness in grief.[19]

A concept that can help to broaden our understanding of rational thought and agency in the context of emotional upheaval is that of "transformative experience," introduced by L. A. Paul (2014). According to Paul, not all decision-making can involve weighing up the probable consequences of our decisions in light of our current values, as some decisions have consequences that we are incapable of envisaging. Furthermore, some of these decisions harbor the potential to alter *who we are*, by substantially changing our values. Hence, they are both epistemically and personally "transformative," in ways that cannot be fully grasped before we make them. Given this, they cannot be chosen rationally on the basis of cost-benefit analyses or the aim of maximizing utility: "If we want to rationally choose our acts based on how we envision our possible futures, transformative experiences raise philosophical barriers with practical implications" (Paul 2014, 52).

The emphasis of Paul's discussion is on choices we make. However, such experiences do not arise solely through the intended effects of our own actions. They can also originate in failures of action, unintended consequences of action, the actions or omissions of others, events that do not depend on human agency, and various combinations of actions and events that occur over short or long periods of time. Carel and Kidd (2020) emphasize how the capacity for transformative experience reveals the extent of our vulnerability, contingency, and dependence on others. They add that these experiences should not be construed as occasional blips in otherwise stable lives. Many people live with an enduring sense of vulnerability and instability.

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Circumstances over which they have little control continually undermine the kind of structured world required for certain kinds of deliberation:

> If our epistemic and practical agency takes place against a complex background of contingency, vulnerability, and subjection, then few of us enjoy anything like optimal conditions for the careful, procedural deliberation and decision that, ideally, human agency requires. Many of the major experiences of the lives of most people are not elected or chosen—we do not *select* them but are *subjected* to them. (Carel and Kidd 2020, 201–202)

I have suggested that even an apparently stable experiential world is in a state of flux, due to more subtle changes associated with mundane emotional episodes and processes. So, we could take the line that most or even all experience is transformative to some degree. However, when contemplating the phenomenology of grief, it is more fruitful to adopt a contrastive conception, according to which certain disturbances of life structure stand out from the mundane background. It can be added that these disturbances generally involve temporally extended processes, which themselves include various constituent transformative experiences. Such processes encompass both active choice and passive subjection. A consideration of grief's temporally extended structure and the phenomenology of indeterminacy also leads us to emphasize the process of transformation itself. Grief does not involve simply moving from one epistemic and evaluative predicament to another. There is also the place in between, which may become an enduring aspect of one's life.[20]

Thus, instead of maintaining that grief is irrational, we should question impoverished conceptions of rationality that fail to accommodate the challenges faced by a dependent being with an intricately organized life structure, placed at the mercy of contingent events.[21] We make our decisions against the backdrop of an experiential world that is constantly shifting in subtle ways, and our emotional lives cannot be understood adequately if they are thought of as arising exclusively *within* that world. Emotions maintain, repair, and revise a structure that much of our thought operates within. This role is not contrary to reason but part of a broader ability to think in ways that are consistent with the realities of our changing situation.

When tasked with navigating indeterminacy, we do not rely solely on our own abilities. We also draw on relations with other people and a wider social world. For instance, where the life structure needed to choose between p and q is lacking, there remains the option of turning to others for guidance

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and support. Something that distinguishes bereavement from other forms of loss is that the person who has died may also be the person to whom one would otherwise have turned when navigating upheaval. One therefore faces a distinctive challenge. However, this need not involve coming to recognize the irrevocable, total absence of the deceased. As we will see in chapters 5 and 6, it is also important to acknowledge another, quite different form of indeterminacy, which can amount to an enduring sense of connection with the deceased.

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5 Experiencing the Dead

In chapters 2–4, I discussed how grief involves a dynamic disturbance of one's experiential world or life structure. So far, the emphasis has been on what has happened to the bereaved. Given this, much of what I have said also applies to the phenomenology of loss more generally. However, I will now turn to the specifically *interpersonal* dimensions of grief—how those who are grieving experience and relate to both the living and the dead. When we grieve over a death, the sense of loss does not just concern our own life structure but also the person who has died; it is not exhausted by "what I have lost."[1] Furthermore, the extent to which an experiential world is disrupted by bereavement is to be distinguished from the personal aspects of loss, as caring deeply for someone need not involve substantial integration of that person into one's current projects, habits, and pastimes. Nevertheless, the two aspects of grief remain interdependent. For instance, I will suggest that how we experience and relate to the dead contributes to how we experience and negotiate indeterminacy. In addition, various different ways of remaining *connected* to the deceased depend to a large extent on how we experience and relate to a larger social world.

The task of this chapter is to identify a distinctive way in which those who are bereaved often continue to experience the *presence* of the deceased. I will approach this through a consideration of experiences that are sometimes referred to as *bereavement hallucinations*. That will set the scene for chapters 6–8, which consider ways in which we continue to relate to the dead, how our emotional lives are interpersonally regulated, and how interpersonal and social factors are relevant to distinctions that have been proposed between typical and pathological forms of grief.

Bereavement hallucinations, defined as perceptual or perception-like experiences of the deceased, are widely reported. Although some consist

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of sensory experiences in particular modalities, as when seeing, hearing, or being touched by the deceased, the most common form of experience involves a nonspecific sense or feeling of presence. I will suggest that this does not depend on a sensory experience of more specific properties that serve to identify the person. Instead, it involves a feeling of what we might call that person's unique "style," consisting in her characteristic ways of interacting with the social world and, more specifically, affecting oneself. This experience of style is not attributable to a determinate representation of the person, perceptual or otherwise. Rather, a sense of being with that particular person essentially incorporates the potential to be affected by her in ways that are not fully anticipated. I will elucidate this contrast through a discussion of C. S. Lewis's memoir, *A Grief Observed*.

5.1 Bereavement Hallucinations

The term "bereavement hallucination" refers to a perceptual or perception-like experience of someone who has died, usually a partner, family member, or close friend. These experiences are sometimes described in terms of specific sensory modalities: one might see the person, hear them, or feel their touch. However, the most common form of experience is a nonspecific *sense* or *feeling* of presence. Conceptualizing these phenomena might seem straightforward enough; they are experiences in one or more sensory modalities, which resemble—to varying degrees—perceptual experiences of a particular individual. In other words, they conform to an orthodox conception of hallucination: an experience that is similar or even identical to a veridical experience of p but occurs in the absence of p.

Perhaps this captures some of the relevant phenomena. Nevertheless, it remains unclear what a nonspecific feeling or sense of presence consists of. We are faced with a puzzle. If first-person accounts are taken at face value, the content of the experience is quite specific: the presence of a particular person. But this does not originate in more concrete sensory contents, such as hearing or seeing that person. What, then, does it involve? Of course, one could insist that there is in fact a sensory content, which is either sufficient to specify a given individual or at least disposes us to infer the presence of that individual. It could be added that people do not report this aspect of the experience because they either lack reflective access to it or find it hard to describe. However, I will adopt a different approach, by showing how

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it is indeed possible to experience a particular person in a way that does not depend on sensory contents such as visual images, sounds, smells, or tactual feelings. There is instead a distinctive way of being *affected*, which amounts to the sense of being with that person and can be further analyzed in terms of experienced possibilities. Although I acknowledge that not all perception-like experiences of the deceased take this form, it is plausible that some of them do. Furthermore, other experiences that do involve specific sensory contents may also incorporate the nonspecific sense of presence described here.

Bereavement hallucinations are reported to be commonplace and, in most instances, benign. An early and widely cited study by Rees (1971) involved 227 widows and 66 widowers in Wales. Nearly half of those interviewed reported experiencing the deceased. The most frequent experience involved simply "feeling the presence of the dead spouse" and was reported by 39 percent of respondents. This was followed by visual hallucinations (14 percent), auditory verbal hallucinations (13.3 percent), and then tactile hallucinations (2.7 percent). Rees regards the majority of these occurrences as "normal and helpful accompaniments of widowhood" (1971, 37). More recent studies report similar findings (e.g., Bennett and Bennett 2000; Keen, Murray, and Payne 2013; Castelnovo et al. 2015). There are consistent references in the empirical literature to a *sense* or *feeling* of proximity that does not originate in a more specific sensory content, at least not one that is readily identified. For example, Keen, Murray, and Payne (2013, 390) describe the most common type of experience as "a sense or feeling that the deceased person is close by without experiencing them in any sensory modality," while Longman, Lindstrom, and Clark (1988, 44) write that "an overwhelming sense of presence was often expressed indicating that the subjects felt they were not alone." Similarly, Steffen and Coyle (2012, 35) state that "people report that they can somehow sense or feel the physical proximity of the deceased loved one." However, descriptions of the relevant experience tend to be cursory, and it is far from clear what it actually consists of (Castelnovo et al. 2015, 271).

Given this lack of clarity, there is the methodological worry that studies may be using the same terms to address different phenomena, without making those differences explicit (Datson and Marwit 1997, 133). Conversely, where different terms are used, it is not always clear whether they have a common or overlapping referent. For instance, Dannenbaum and Kinnier

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(2009) address what they call "imaginal relationships" with the dead, rather than hallucinations or sensed-presence experiences. Such relationships may encompass some bereavement hallucinations (those that involve an experience of connection) but not others (which are more detached). There are also issues concerning the nature and extent of cultural variability. According to Keen, Murray, and Payne (2013), up to 90 percent of bereaved spouses in some cultures experience the presence of the deceased, but prevalence varies considerably. Furthermore, differing cultural attitudes influence how people interpret and respond to their own and others' experiences, in ways that may well affect how those experiences unfold. For instance, whether or not a sensed-presence experience is evaluated positively and proves to be ultimately beneficial may hinge, to a large extent, on whether it conforms to cultural norms and whether it is interpreted in accordance with culturally accepted practices (Steffen and Coyle 2012). In light of this potential variation, it is debatable whether a core, underlying experience can be identified cross-culturally and, if it can, what that experience involves.[2]

Differing interpretive frameworks are also explicitly or implicitly adopted by researchers. Consider the term "hallucination," which suggests a discrete experiential content that is aberrant in failing to track what is actually the case. For example, Castelnovo et al. (2015, 266) define what they term "post-bereavement hallucinatory experiences" as "abnormal sensory experiences that are frequently reported by bereaved individuals without a history of mental disorder." However, this is in tension with first-person interpretations, which often regard the experience as valuable and/or as a source of knowledge, integrating it into a wider-ranging account of the world. Moreover, it is not always clear what the criteria are for deeming an experience normal or abnormal. A nonveridical experience might well be a normal reaction to certain events, meaning a reaction that is not only commonplace but also situationally appropriate according to one or another set of criteria. One option is to construe abnormality in specifically epistemic terms: a type of experience is abnormal when it is invariably misleading. However, matters are not so straightforward, as an experience with nonveridical elements could still serve to reveal truths about oneself, one's relationships, and one's values.[3]

An alternative way of conceptualizing these phenomena is suggested by *continuing bonds* approaches (which I will return to in chapter 6). The common theme here is that grief does not culminate in letting go and severing

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one's ties with the deceased. Instead, most people in most cultures continue to relate to the deceased in some way. Relationships are reorganized rather than altogether lost and may continue to play important roles in people's lives (e.g., Klass, Silverman, and Nickman 1996; Klass and Steffen 2018). Which perspective is adopted will have a bearing on how sensed-presence experiences are conceived of, including whether or not they are deemed aberrant or pathological (Sanger 2009). In particular, I want to emphasize the difference between a hallucination (construed as a perceptual experience of *p* that arises in the absence of *p*) and a sense of connection (where the emphasis is on relating to someone rather than just experiencing their presence).[4] I will suggest that we can better understand what certain sensed-presence experiences involve by attending to their relational phenomenology, rather than seeking to identify some elusive component of the experience that adds up to the sense of someone's presence.

I will adopt a provisional distinction between two broad and overlapping forms of experience: those with contents traceable to one or more sensory modalities and those involving a nonspecific sense or feeling of presence.[5] However, interpretive caution is required here, given the likelihood that experiences of the latter kind are sometimes described in sensory terms as well. More generally, terms such as "see," "hear," and "touch" are used in various ways that do not refer to sensory phenomena: "let's return to the point you just touched on"; "I hear you loud and clear"; "I see what you mean." It could well be that people also resort to such terms when attempting to understand and convey an unfamiliar form of experience (one that does not appear to originate in a particular sensory modality) in more familiar ways. Here, I am concerned with those experiences that *do* consist, partly or wholly, in a nonspecific sense of presence, regardless of how they might be described.

5.2 Personal Presence

In contemplating the nature of sensed-presence experiences, it is important to make clear what is meant by "presence" in this context. Presence could be thought of as a straightforward matter of spatiotemporal coincidence, as suggested by descriptions such as "feeling that the deceased person is close." Thus, several other people would be *present to me* when we are all doing our shopping in the same supermarket at the same time. However, what counts as sufficient proximity for presence depends on the

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situation. "We were both present at the concert in Wembley Stadium" allows for greater spatial distance between two parties than "we were both present at the job interview." In both cases, presence seems to be more a matter of having access to a common object of perception or attention, such as an interviewee or a concert, than of spatiotemporal proximity. So, one could talk equally of those who were present at an online meeting. The requirement of shared access to something is even more evident in examples such as "twenty people, who were present at the scene of the accident, have provided statements," where the point is not just that they were there but also that they witnessed something. Active engagement with something can also be a relevant factor. For example, "she was present at the exam" suggests participation in the exam. Standing just inside the door of the exam room for two minutes does not suffice. Being present can further involve acting in accordance with certain norms, as in "his presence at the event was required." Other uses of the term relate to more diffuse ways of interacting with and influencing one's social surroundings, as in "his presence was toxic in every way." The presence of something can also involve being *affected* by it in some way or somehow *relating* to it, as when someone feels "overwhelmed by the presence of God."

"Presence" thus takes on a range of different connotations, and geographical proximity is not always sufficient or even necessary. It not sufficient when someone stands at the door of an exam room, and it is not necessary when someone is present at an online meeting. Hence, where someone is said to *experience the presence of the deceased*, it cannot be assumed that close physical proximity is most central to the experience in question. Instead, I will emphasize the sense of relatedness or connection.

It is important to note that what is experienced as present is not just any person but *that particular person*. Encountering someone in a distinctively personal way involves an essential particularity that is lacking in our encounters with other types of entities. Suppose you somehow sense the presence of a coffee cup. Perhaps it is a particular coffee cup—the one your grandmother gave you. On the other hand, the question "Which coffee cup did you experience?" may not have an answer. It could just be any old coffee cup. The question "Which coffee cup?" might be met with bemusement, as might "Which sausage roll?" "Which brick?" "Which tadpole?" "Which coaster?" and "Which paving stone?" One could respond that perception invariably involves experiencing particulars. But my point is that it seldom *matters*

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whether a currently experienced entity happens to be this one or that one. Although one might experience a unique coffee cup, this need not involve experiencing it *as* a unique coffee cup, as standing out in any way from other coffee cups. In the case of a person, however, there is always the further question of *who* that person is. Granted, there are many cases where the question "Which *x*?" is also appropriate for an impersonal entity; it matters which house we are heading to, which plate we are eating from, and which car we own. Nevertheless, this applies only to certain specific members of those kinds. Where other people are concerned, there is invariably the potential to engage with someone as a particular person. And, when we relate to someone in a distinctively *personal* manner, there is always a sense of that person's particularity, of their being not just a *what* but a *who*.

One might think that experiencing someone as a particular person just amounts to having an experience with a sensory content specific enough to identify that individual or, at least, a sensory content that is reliably associated with her. This raises philosophical issues concerning the nature and scope of sensory perceptual content. Perhaps that content is itself rich enough to constitute the experience of being in someone's presence. Alternatively, an initial sensory perceptual experience might be supplemented by inference or interpretation. Another option is to conceive of sensory experience in more dynamic terms; a rich interpersonal experience *crystallizes* out of an initial experience with a less determinate content, rather than being an inference or interpretation that follows a sensory episode.

These alternatives are all consistent with the assumption that either sensory content alone or sensory content supplemented by something else suffices to identify a given individual. However, I suggest instead that the sense of personal presence has a relational structure, which can amount to the sense of being with a particular person. This structure does not depend upon sensory experience. The relevant phenomenology is consequently obscured by the term "hallucination," insofar as it suggests a nonveridical, sensory experience of something or other.

But how could we experience the presence of a particular person if the experience does not originate in sensory experiences of more specific properties? To answer that question, I want to emphasize the distinction between a sense of being in close proximity to the deceased and a sense of being *with* that person. The latter is not exhausted by the experience of a certain entity occupying a certain location. What, then, does it consist

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of? First of all, it should be noted that superficially similar descriptions of feeling or sensing the presence of the deceased can refer to experiences of quite different kinds. In chapter 3, we saw how a sense of presence can take the form of an experiential world that incorporates possibilities involving a person. However, first-person accounts often describe localized perceptual experiences, as distinct from diffuse ways of experiencing and relating to the world as a whole: "I felt him beside me in bed a few times—as if he were getting into bed and settling down to sleep" (#19); "I heard him tell me he loved me and I saw his head on the pillow by mine when that happened" (#48).

How might experiences of this latter kind arise? One influential approach to sensed-presence experiences and bereavement hallucinations emphasizes the role of *searching behavior*. There is a kind of yearning or longing on the part of the bereaved, which leads them to look for the deceased, despite knowing that the person will never return. This also disposes them to interpret sensory stimuli in certain ways, generating nonveridical sensory experiences of the deceased (e.g., Parkes 1970). We can think of at least some of these "searching" behaviors in terms of cohesive patterns of anticipation that are integral to perceptual and practical activities—habitual expectations that are yet to be revised. (Hence, they are also compatible with a more pervasive sense of presence, of the kind addressed in chapter 3.) Rather than *hallucinating* something that is not there at all, some experiences will involve perceiving something that is currently present, but in an illusory way, as when someone fleetingly looks like the deceased. Other experiences will involve simple acts of misrecognition. It is not always clear, on the basis of first-person reports, which of these categories an experience falls into: "I often think I see my Dad when I am out in the places where we used to go or where I would see him" (#11); "every now and again I would see someone who looked like her and my heart would jump but then I would remember she was dead" (#144). Indeed, it is doubtful that neat, categorical distinctions between "hallucination," "illusion," and "misrecognition" apply to the variety of perceptual and perception-like experiences generated by patterns of habitual anticipation, which instead resemble one another to varying degrees.

Some such experiences may be comparable to the effects of sensory deprivation. Hoffman (2007) offers an account of auditory verbal hallucinations in schizophrenia, appealing to the concept of "social deafferentation." Certain hallucinations, he suggests, are functionally similar to phantom

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limbs; both occur due to sensory deprivation. In the case of phantom limbs, the experience of continuing presence arises partly because of deafferentation (loss of sensory input). Similar experiences are associated with sensory deprivation more generally. For example, if a person is prevented from seeing for a day or two, complex visual phenomena usually start to appear. Hoffman suggests that we are similarly reliant on sensory stimulation from the interpersonal domain and that people with schizophrenia diagnoses are often socially isolated. So, their hallucinations sometimes occur in the same way: "High levels of social withdrawal/isolation in vulnerable individuals prompt social cognition programs to produce spurious social meaning." These experiences thus involve the "repopulating" of a "barren interpersonal world" (Hoffman 2007, 1066–1067).

Although Hoffman is concerned specifically with schizophrenia, his position is, if anything, more plausible when it comes to bereavement hallucinations. Bereavement can involve losing someone who was integrated into one's activities over many years, in predictable, patterned ways that involve numerous sensory expectations. It can lead to an experience of interpersonal privation that is more sudden, extreme, specifically focused, and structured than what Hoffman refers to, disposing the bereaved person toward various nonveridical experiences involving the deceased. These could occur alongside the more diffuse sense of presence described in chapter 3. Thus, although localized sensory experiences are distinct from the retention of an experiential world implicating the deceased, the two can be closely related.

Experiences of both these kinds need to be distinguished from something else, which could equally be described in terms of someone's presence. What I have in mind here is subtle, difficult to pin down, and—consequently—easy to misinterpret or miss altogether. It is also of central importance in understanding what it is to experience and relate to the deceased in a specifically *personal* way. The experience in question involves a nonlocalized sense of personal presence that is *not* attributable to retention of a habitual world. Consider descriptions such as the following: "feeling the deceased is standing close by"; "feeling the deceased is walking alongside"; "feeling the deceased is around" (Steffen and Coyle 2011, 586). These, one might suggest, do not involve engaging in some activity *plus* experiencing the deceased nearby, but engaging in activities and experiencing one's surroundings in ways that one did when with that person. So, the person is not simply *there*, as a discrete object of perception, but implicated in a nonlocalized way by

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what is there. To account for this, it will not suffice to appeal to retention of a habitual world. That does not capture the way in which the presence of the deceased is itself a conspicuous part of one's experience. Feeling that someone is *walking alongside* involves something more. It is not merely that, as one walks, the surrounding world offers possibilities that presuppose the person. Her presence is itself a salient part of the experience, amounting to more than the forgetting of absence. Crucially, the experience of walking with someone is also dynamic and changeable. As one walks, the ongoing relationship shapes how one's surroundings appear, in ways that vary from moment to moment. Sensed-presence experiences of this kind can also involve an experience of ongoing "communication" and "mutuality" (Steffen and Coyle 2011, 589). They are thus importantly different from a project that remains frozen in time after someone's death. A companion with whom one walks can imbue the surrounding world with new and changing possibilities; things seem more alive with her than when alone. This is sometimes what is meant when we talk of enjoying someone's company.

Three different kinds of presence-experience can therefore be distinguished: (a) an experience of the surrounding world that continues to implicate the deceased; (b) a localized sensory experience of the deceased; and (c) a sense of currently relating to the deceased, in a way that cannot be fully accounted for in terms of (a) or (b). To understand the nature of (c), we need to retain an emphasis on the experience of significant possibilities. Central to the relevant experience, I suggest, is a dynamic, self-affecting sense of the possible, something that can at the same time comprise the sense of being with a particular person. Although there may also be sensory experiences associated with one or more externally directed sensory modalities, they are not primarily responsible for the sense of *being with that person*.

More generally, interpersonal experience is not just a matter of perceiving certain physical properties and inferring the presence of an internal mental life lurking behind them. At this point, it is informative to return to Merleau-Ponty's work, where a recurring theme is that we encounter the experiences of others as inherent in their expressions, gestures, and goal-directed actions. Merleau-Ponty suggests that we are able to do so because perceived movements always point to more than what is currently revealed to sensory experience. However, what they point to is not something currently hidden behind them, inside a head, which is causally responsible for what we do perceive. Consider the following passage, which emphasizes

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how the sense of another person's presence is not to be accounted for in terms of specific combinations of perceived properties or something distinct from those properties that is itself perceptually inaccessible:

> The other is never present face to face. Even when, in the heat of discussion, I directly confront my adversary, it is not in that violent face with its grimace, or even in that voice traveling toward me, that the intention which reaches me is to be found. The adversary is never quite localized; his voice, his gesticulations, his twitches, are only effects, a sort of stage effect, a ceremony. . . . One must believe that there was someone over there. But where? Not in that overstrained voice, not in that face lined like any well-worn object. Certainly not *behind* that setup: I know quite well that back there, there is only "darkness crammed with organs." (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 133)

Merleau-Ponty is consistently critical of a tendency among philosophers to construe interpersonal experience in terms of an encounter with observable behavior that leads us to postulate an internal mental life. As an alternative, he proposes that we experience the mental lives of others as inherent in their activities, in the guise of a cohesive and dynamic set of potentialities for expressions, gestures, activities, and relations. These possibilities are neither straightforwardly present nor absent:

> This is what *animalia* and men are: absolutely present beings who have a wake of the negative. A perceiving body that I see is also a certain absence that is hollowed out and tactfully dealt with behind that body by its behavior. But absence is itself rooted in presence; it is through his body that the other person's soul is in my eyes. "Negativities" also count in the sensible world, which is decidedly the universal one. (Merleau-Ponty 1964a, 172)

Together, the unfolding possibilities constitute a temporally organized pattern, what Merleau-Ponty would call a "style" (1945/2012, 342). We saw in chapter 4 how the dynamic structure of world experience can be construed in terms of an overarching *style* of unfolding. Similarly, we might say that encountering someone in a *personal* way involves anticipating and experiencing a distinctively personal style.[6] This involves being *affected* by the other person, having the possibilities of one's own world somehow altered by an engagement with their possibilities:

> My gaze falls upon a living body performing an action and the objects that surround it immediately receive a new layer of signification: they are no longer merely what I could do with them, they are also what this behavior is about to do with them. A vortex forms around the perceived body into which my world is drawn and, so to speak, sucked in. (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 369)

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Similar themes feature in the work of various other phenomenologists, albeit expressed in different ways and with slightly different emphases. The best-known example is Sartre (1943/1989), who construes our most fundamental sense of "the Other" in terms of being affected by their presence in a prereflective, bodily manner. With this, the world is no longer organized in terms of one's own possibilities and one instead becomes an object for them. Beauvoir (1947/2018) also emphasizes the self-affecting experience of others' possibilities. But, in contrast to Sartre's account, she maintains that a sense of others' freedom is essential to sustaining one's own experience of an open future. We also find a complementary formulation in the work of Løgstrup (1956/1997), who suggests that we are unavoidably responsible for others, as any dealings we have with another person will always *affect* that person, so as to "determine the scope and hue of his or her world," making it "large or small, bright or drab, rich or dull, threatening or secure" (18). What he describes likewise involves shaping and reshaping one another's experiences of possibilities. Løgstrup goes so far as to suggest that relying exclusively on a determinate, image-like representation of a person, rather than letting that person "emerge through words, deeds, and conduct," amounts to a "denial of life" (14).[7]

Interpersonal encounters thus shape, in an ongoing and ordinarily subtle way, how we experience our surroundings. The effect is most pronounced in contexts of sustained interaction, where it encompasses not only world experience but also language and thought. As Merleau-Ponty observes, interactions of a certain quality have the potential to dislodge us from familiar ways of experiencing, acting, thinking, and speaking, in a manner that cannot be attributed merely to transmission of propositional contents between the two parties:

> Speaking and listening not only presuppose thought but—even more essential, for it is practically the foundation of thought—the capacity to allow oneself to be pulled down and rebuilt again by the other person before one, by others who may come along, and in principle by anyone. (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 19–20)

> A genuine conversation gives me access to thoughts that I did not know myself capable of, that I *was* not capable of, and sometimes I feel myself *followed* in a route unknown to myself which my words, cast back by the other, are in the process of tracing out for me. (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 13)

The suggestion is not that another individual *possesses* the potential to affect us in some way. Rather, it is through patterns of interaction between

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people that new meanings are forged: "My words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion and are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 370). To this, it can be added that the anticipation of such interactions comprises an openness to the possibility of one's world being altered in subtle or more pronounced ways.[8]

In comparing bereavement to phantom limbs, Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012, 82–83) writes that we only really understand that someone has died when we anticipate their response and "feel" its irrevocable absence. He adds that we avoid this form of recognition by steering away from situations that require us to confront our loss. However, as noted in chapter 4, the world that we preserve in this way is importantly lacking. Insulated from anything that might threaten its integrity, it is bereft of a more usual openness to certain kinds of future possibilities. What it lacks is a kind of *indeterminacy*, which is quite different from the kind identified in chapter 4. An openness to new possibilities does not erode the structure of one's world. On the contrary, it is an essential complement to that structure, constituting a sense that *this is not all there is*, that things could change for better or for worse in ways not fully specified by one's situation as currently experienced. This openness to possibilities is inseparable from certain kinds of interpersonal relations. Anticipated and actual relations with other people give the experienced world a degree and type of indeterminacy that is consistent both with having a life structure and with moving into an open future.[9]

Importantly, these points apply not only to the structure of interpersonal experience in general but also to relationships with specific individuals. Anticipated and actual relations with *particular people* enrich our lives in distinctive ways. Eugene Gendlin (1978/2003, 115) writes of friendship:

> We all know people with whom it is best not to share anything that matters to us. If we have experienced something exciting, and if we tell it to those people, it will seem almost dull. If we have a secret, we will keep it safe from those people, safe inside us, untold. That way it won't shrivel up and lose all the meaning it has for us. But if you are lucky, you know one person with whom it is the other way around. If you tell that person something exciting, it becomes more exciting. A great story will expand, you will find yourself telling it in more detail, finding the richness of all the elements, more than when you only thought about it alone. Whatever matters to you, you save it until you can tell it to that person.

To *know someone* is, in part, to experience and be affected by that person's distinctive style, by relational possibilities that are unique to her. Indeed,

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the integrity of one's world can come to depend, to varying degrees, on how one relates to that person and vice versa. Hence, with a bereavement, what can also be lost is the prospect of a particular style of relating, not just to the person who has died but to the world in general: "each experience is nice, but is diminished by not sharing it with her" (#40); "no wife to share experiences with. Even saying 'what a rubbish TV program, why did we watch it?'" (#101). What is lost is not something that was previously at the forefront of awareness. As Jacobson (2014, 107) observes, we generally experience the world in a manner that depends upon others but at the same time eclipses their contributions:

> This orientation to the world can, in fact, occlude our awareness of the interpersonal intimacy that is at its root, for we can come to take ourselves simply to be seeing the world as it is, on our own, without recognizing how much our experience is in fact made possible through the support of the other.

This point applies to the values, projects, pastimes, and commitments described in chapter 2, which together give the world a stable, enduring structure. But it applies equally to dynamic, changing patterns of significant possibilities that we find in our surroundings. One might take for granted that situations are imbued with this kind of openness, without recognizing its dependence on potential or actual relations with particular individuals and also people in general.

Now, it could be that, with a person's death, the capacity to be affected by her in such ways is altogether lost. That may well be the case sometimes, but not always. My suggestion is that certain so-called bereavement hallucinations involve a self-affecting experience of possibilities that constitutes the sense of being with a particular person. Furthermore, various other experiences, which would not be categorized as hallucinations, involve a less pronounced, longer-term sense of that person's continuing presence in one's life. For example, following Merleau-Ponty's sudden death in 1961, Jean-Paul Sartre writes in his memorial essay "Merleau-Ponty *vivant*" that "Merleau is still too much alive for anyone to be able to describe him." Their friendship, he suggests, somehow endures, in stark contrast to friendships with those still living that have ended. Sartre adds, "Perhaps he will be more easily approached—to my way of thinking, in any case—if I tell the story of that quarrel which never took place, our friendship" (1998, 565). Sartre's remarks can be interpreted in terms of what I have described. The potential to be affected in a certain distinctive way associated with

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Merleau-Ponty endures. This cannot be captured by any attempt to describe him in terms of determinate properties, regardless of how detailed and accurate that description might be. No such description could capture the sense of openness, potentiality, and spontaneity associated with *that particular person*. Sartre thus approaches the task of description obliquely, through the story of a friendship and the obstacles it faced. This, unlike a more direct account of a person's characteristics, evokes something of their unique style.[10]

So, there is a type or aspect of interpersonal experience that is neither exhausted by the contents of sensory experience nor obtained via inference or interpretation. This accounts not only for the experience of being with a person but also for that of being with a specific person. In short, things *look* different, depending on who we are currently with and what we are doing together. The sense of being with a person involves being affected by her unique style. A coffee cup, in contrast, is not self-affecting in a personal way and lacks this essential particularity. This explains why certain sensed-presence experiences are difficult to pin down and describe. There is little to be said about what is experienced, nothing specific or concrete to report; one just has the feeling of someone's presence. However, some cases will also involve more concrete sensory experiences. After all, it seems likely that an ongoing sense of relating to someone in a structured way will evoke sensory imaginings, as well as memories with sensory contents. Furthermore, these may be confused with current sensory experiences (by the subject of experience herself or by others who attempt to interpret her experiences), given their association with the sense of currently relating to someone. Regardless of what else it might involve, an experience of *being affected* by someone's style is always a bodily one. As discussed in chapter 3, how we experience the possibilities offered by our surroundings is inextricable from felt, bodily dispositions. Thus, in experiencing a person's style, we are affected in a bodily way that involves changing patterns of anticipation.[11]

5.3 The Grief of C. S. Lewis

If I am right that certain experiences of presence involve being affected by a person's *style*, then those experiences are quite different from determinate, perceptual representations of the person. In fact, there can be conflict between the two, given that an experience of style is essentially indeterminate. Suppose one somehow managed to concoct a perceptual and cognitive

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representation of the dead person that consisted in an exhaustive inventory of all those properties associated with her—absolutely nothing is left behind. This would altogether fail to accommodate her distinctive style. Doing so requires being open to possibilities that are not fully anticipated, to something that is not fully captured by the contents of one's own mental states.

To make the contrast clearer, let us turn to an example. In his famous memoir, *A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis charts the grief he experienced following the death of his wife, Joy Davidman (referred to as "H"). He describes in detail the pain of losing her again by failing to retain her in memory. This is contrasted with a sense of her presence that later returns. What Lewis describes is not localized, episodic, or pronounced to the extent that some sensed-presence experiences are. Nevertheless, his account serves to illustrate the more general contrast between retaining a *sense* of a particular person and having an accurate *image* of that person, in the guise of a memory, imagining, or perceptual experience.

Lewis describes how, in his sorrow, he sought to preserve his wife in memory and not let her slip away. Yet, his doing so prevents him from experiencing anything of *her*. She ends up being replaced by something that appears to him as his own creation:

> I am thinking about her nearly always. Thinking of the H. facts—real words, looks, laughs, and actions of hers. But it is my own mind that selects and groups them. Already, less than a month after her death, I can feel the slow, insidious beginning of a process that will make the H. I think of into a more and more imaginary woman. Founded on fact, no doubt, I shall put in nothing fictitious (or I hope I shan't). But won't the composition inevitably become more and more my own? The reality is no longer there to check me, to pull me up short, as the real H. so often did, so unexpectedly, by being so thoroughly herself and not me.
>
> The most precious gift that marriage gave me was this constant impact of something very close and intimate yet all the time unmistakably other, resistant—in a word, real. (Lewis 1961/1966, 17)

What Lewis seems to be saying here is that, however many properties are held in memory, and however vividly a person's properties are imagined, this *kind* of recollection is ultimately self-defeating. It will always culminate in the eradication of a person's distinctiveness. To experience his wife, to be with her and feel connected to her, was to be affected in a certain way. It was to anticipate and experience a transcending of his own possibilities, including his own imaginative efforts. Without this, the sense of *her* is lost;

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what remains is experienced as originating in him. As Lewis writes, "The rough, sharp, cleansing tang of her otherness is gone. What pitiable cant to say 'She will live forever in my memory!' *Live?* That is exactly what she won't do" (18–19). What is lacking is her distinctive *style* of resistance to his own expectations and imaginings. To experience her is to feel her effect on his world. This essentially involves an openness to possibilities that are not of his own making. Hence, not knowing everything about her is not a contingent, epistemic shortcoming that might be overcome. To encounter someone in a personal way is always to experience that person as surpassing one's determinate representations. To know everything about her would be to cease experiencing and relating to her in that way.

Later, as Lewis's sorrow lessens, so does the intense "longing" associated with his self-defeating attempts to hold onto his wife in memory. With this, there is a renewed experience of connection, involving a different kind of presence:

> And suddenly at the very moment when, so far, I mourned H. least, I remembered her best. Indeed it was something (almost) better than memory; an instantaneous, unanswerable impression. To say it was like a meeting would be going too far. Yet there was that in it which tempts one to use those words. It was as if the lifting of the sorrow removed a barrier. (39)

This "impression" is something that Lewis contrasts with a determinate representation derived from memory, imagination, and/or sensory perceptual experience. His description is consistent with what Merleau-Ponty would call another person's *style* and its effect on one's sense of the possible. This need not be limited to a particular location, project, or pastime. A relationship with another person, living or dead, can pervade all aspects of one's life. And so, as Lewis ceases to worry about imposing a false memory and replacing his wife with his image of her, "she seems to meet me everywhere," not as an apparition with determinate properties, occupying a particular place, but as "a sort of unobtrusive but massive sense that she is, just as much as ever, a fact to be taken into account" (44).

As discussed earlier, some of those phenomena labeled as *bereavement hallucinations* may well be associated with "searching behavior" (broadly construed). However, Lewis's account points to something different. He finds his wife only after a certain kind of search is abandoned, one that involved, in his case, memory and imagination more so than perception. What he then discovers is not a nonveridical sensory image but a renewed

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connection. His description is reminiscent of the Myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. As Orpheus returns from the Underworld with Eurydice, he must walk ahead and not look back. Yet he increasingly doubts her presence and eventually turns in order to acquire the determinate sensory experience that he currently lacks. As he does so, her shadow returns to the Underworld, this time irrevocably. Lewis's narrative runs the other way. The image of his wife eradicates what is distinctive about her and she is lost, returning only when he desists in his efforts to preserve her in memory. In both cases, the image not only fails to capture the other person; it is also what renders her inaccessible.

Interestingly, Lewis describes his grief as inseparable from his relationship with God. Loss of connection with his wife coincides with the loss of a faith that now strikes him as superficial and naive. Similarly, a renewed connection with his wife spells the rekindling of faith. The common theme here is inexhaustibility, something resisting all of one's efforts to conceptualize and somehow contain it: "Images of the Holy easily become holy images—sacrosanct. My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it Himself. He is the great iconoclast" (55). In both cases, something is experienced as offering up possibilities that surpass one's own cognitions, affecting one in a dynamic, distinctive, *living* way.[12]

Lewis's grief was notably solitary. However, the presence of the deceased need not be something that is experienced in isolation from other people. As Kathleen Higgins (2013, 175) observes, stories that we tell one another about the dead or that we co-construct with others are not always aimed at preserving specific, determinate properties in memory. They can also play a role in sustaining a sense of someone's spontaneity, that person's ability to surpass any one narrative: "Narratives . . . symbolically reanimate the dead because they allow fresh insights, recalling something of the continual potential for surprise in an ongoing relationship. A story invites interpretation, and its meaning remains in flux as the interpreter reconsiders various features of it." Again, what we have here is an openness to possibilities involving the person, a sense of incompleteness, a sense that there will always be more to say. This is to be contrasted with the project of assembling a single, increasingly accurate account of the person.

Returning to the theme of chapter 4, we can now see that grief involves an interplay between two importantly different *kinds* of indeterminacy.

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One of these, described in this chapter, enriches the structure of a human life, pointing to there being possibilities beyond the contents of one's current memories and imaginings The other, described in chapter 4, involves an erosion of life structure. A sense of continuing presence, whether pronounced and ephemeral or more subtle and enduring, can contribute to how we experience and respond to this erosion. It does so not by providing new structure to replace what has been lost but by sustaining the sense that certain kinds of possibilities remain, including the possibility of things coming to matter in new ways. In other words, it contributes to the sustenance of hope. The following description, for example, suggests an enduring sense of being affected by the person who died, in ways that continue to enrich and give direction to one's life:

> I can ALWAYS feel his presence—he is with me everywhere I go—he is part of me and always will be. I don't believe in afterlife or ghosts or anything like that, but I can really feel that he is here with me all the time. He was so much part of my life that I feel I have sort of become him in a way—his wonderful way of thinking, of seeing life clearly, his humanity, his kindness and generosity—he is still here in me. (#127)

Our relations with the living can similarly involve the kind of experience identified here: a distinctive way of being affected that also amounts to a dynamic sense of the possible. Hence, we should be careful not to overstate the importance of relations with the dead in sustaining the sense of an open future that incorporates the potential for positive development. Even so, as we will further see in chapter 6, whether and how we relate to the dead does have an important role to play.

5.4 Beyond Hallucination

For many philosophers of mind, a *perfect hallucination* is a nonveridical experience of *p* that is either identical to or at least indistinguishable from a veridical experience of *p* (Ratcliffe 2017, chap. 1). What I have identified here is quite different: a sense of current connection with a particular person that is not captured by any sensory perceptual content, however rich and detailed.[13] Although such an experience might seem strange and unfamiliar, what I have described is in fact ubiquitous, characterizing our relations with the living and the dead. How things appear significant and salient, how we interact with our surroundings, and the possibilities we entertain in thought

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are all influenced in subtle, prereflective ways by who we are with and who we anticipate being with. Sitting in a restaurant, going for a walk, strolling round a museum, or watching a film can be very different experiences, depending on who we are with and how we relate to them. Engaging with the distinctive styles of certain people may diminish the possibilities on offer, while others add novelty and dynamism to the world.

One might object that, even if what I described here warrants the term "sensed presence," it differs from the type of *feeling* or *sense* of presence that is sometimes classified as "hallucination." The latter is not a diffuse, nonlocalized experience of enduring connection, of the kind that C. S. Lewis eventually rediscovers. Rather, it is episodic and localized, involving an experience of someone as *right here, right now*. At the very least, this involves a more pronounced sense of presence, one that may also be different in kind. However, all that is required in order to accommodate it is some further refinement of the account. First of all, we should allow that a sense of connection can wax and wane, in ways that might be described in terms of a *feeling* of presence that comes and goes. Even so, what I have described remains less specific than the sense that *someone is currently present*. This is because the contrast between losing and retaining a sense of connection applies equally to memories, perceptions, and imaginings. When Lewis loses his wife for a second time, what is lacking is largely an ability to *remember* her in a certain way.

Under what conditions, then, does the experience of connection amount to a more specifically perceptual (or perception-like) presence? My suggestion is simply that certain ways of being affected relate more closely than others to real-time interaction with one's surroundings. How one sees this tree now, the possibilities that this painting embodies now, and the manner in which the significance of one's surroundings changes from moment to moment can all implicate one's relationship with a specific person. Depending on how one's possibilities are affected, there is a relational experience with a more or less specific structure. Given this, the extent to which the relevant phenomenology approximates that of perception will vary. Sometimes, it may be that possibilities ordinarily associated with perceptual experience and current activities combine with remembered and imagined possibilities. This would generate a sense of connection that straddles the boundaries between types of intentionality—a relationship with the deceased that is not experienced as unambiguously present or past, current or imagined.

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With this, the person would appear present but not fully present, or present in a way that differs from other aspects of one's surroundings. The sense of presence will also be diminished to the extent that possibilities associated with real-time interaction, such as those of affecting and interacting with someone, are lacking. Hence, even without the inclusion of sensory experiences with more specific contents, a sense of someone's style can involve varying degrees of specificity and, indeed, of presence. In addition, being affected in a distinctively personal way is compatible with various different emotional qualities, which depend on the kinds of relational possibilities that are salient. For instance, in contrast to a comforting sense of being with a particular person, one's experience could involve an air of inchoate menace or a personal form of threat (such as that of being undermined, blamed, or humiliated), which may or may not be attributable to a specific individual. My analysis can thus accommodate a wide range of experiences, many of which will not be associated specifically with bereavement.[14]

Throughout this chapter, I have adopted a fairly abstract level of description, which allows for considerable variation in how sensed-presence experiences are interpreted and integrated into a person's life, as well as how they are shaped by social and cultural contexts. Given this level of description, combined with the widespread acknowledgment that sensed-presence experiences in general are not culture-specific, there is every reason to think that the kinds of experiences described here occur cross-culturally. For example, Masahiro Morioka (2021, 117) addresses what seems to be the same type of experience, as it occurs in contemporary Japan. Morioka refers to the phenomenon of "conversing" but "without spoken language" and goes on to describe the phenomenon of an animate "persona," which is neither a hidden mind inferred from observable behavior nor something that is apprehended via specific sensory contents. Instead, it consists in a dynamic sense of a particular person, experienced in a self-affecting way through one's living body.

Interestingly, Morioka compares this to something described by Viktor Frankl in a very different context, that of his incarceration in Auschwitz. Frankl writes of how he was sustained by an experience of connection with his wife, despite not knowing whether she was alive or dead. Although he mentions experiencing his wife's "image" with an "uncanny acuteness," he also describes a vivid experience of "mental conversation" that was not exhausted by its sensory qualities. Love, he writes, "goes very far beyond

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the physical person of the beloved"; it involves a sense of "spiritual being," something that does not depend on "whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is still alive at all." Again, we discover something that cannot be traced back to experiences with more determinate sensory contents. A way of being affected, sometimes involving reciprocity, serves to specify a particular person. Frankl refers to the vivid experience of an "image" or "look," but he adds that this was "more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise" (Frankl 2004, 48–50). This *luminosity*, I suggest, is better interpreted in terms of his being acutely affected by his wife's distinctive style, in a way that rekindles or sustains certain significant possibilities, than in terms of a vivid, perception-like image.

In their more subtle forms, experiences of the kind I have described are likely to be widespread among the bereaved. Some people will experience a consistent, and enduring sense of presence, whereas others will have experiences that are more pronounced and sporadic. Some will have perception-like experiences of the deceased. In other cases, though, it will be more a matter of remembering or imagining the person in a certain way. As I will discuss in chapter 6, all of this complements the view that the bereaved maintain a variety of "continuing bonds" with those who have died. It is important to add, however, that a person's style does not always remain accessible. It may fade or change over time, come and go, or be experienced only under certain conditions. Sometimes, it is lost altogether. This is more likely to occur in some circumstances than others. For instance, Køster (2020) describes a distressing sense of loss that can arise when a young child loses a parent and is later unable to summon a sense of what that person was like. That such distress is not more widespread among the bereaved could be taken to indicate that, more generally, we do tend to retain some sense of *who* a person was; we can remember them in a certain *way*.

Merleau-Ponty himself remarks briefly on two contrasting ways of remembering the dead. He does so in the first of three notes that follow his 1953 Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France. On the one hand, he writes, there is a questionable belief in our "closeness" to the dead, which involves being able to hold them in our imagination without their ever being able to place us "in question." On the other hand, there is a form of memory that "respects them," by retaining "the accent of their freedom in the incompleteness of their lives" (Merleau-Ponty 1988, 65). Some appreciation of this difference is perhaps associated with talk of "keeping

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someone's memory alive." The alternative to doing so is not simply "forgetting" but a disconnection between that memory and an openness to new possibilities. The contrast is conveyed vividly by the following passage, where Jacqueline Dooley describes how memories of her daughter are altered by a recognition that they no longer relate, in dynamic ways, to possibilities that continue to unfold:

> Memories are fragile too. Before Ana died, my memories of her bloomed, vivid. They lingered, then faded into new ones. I followed each year of her life as if it were a shining path to a certain future: prom, graduation, college, career, love, marriage, a family of her own. I anticipated Ana's lifetime, stretched in front of me, a certainty.
>
> What use were the old memories in the bright light of the new ones? Death claimed Ana's future. Now all I have are the old memories and I am holding onto them too tightly. They disintegrate under my scrutiny, slipping away like sand through my desperate fingers, showing me the truth whether I want to acknowledge it or not. (Dooley 2020)

The significance of memories relates to how they were, and continue to be, built upon. Memories of a person and of one's relationship with that person retain a degree of indeterminacy and malleability, insofar as the significance of the past remains open to revision in light of possibilities yet to be actualized. Where there are no new possibilities, those memories are frozen, in contrast to memories that remain alive, still pointing to new ways of relating to and being affected by the person. How we remember someone thus depends on whether, how, and when the possibilities we experience are shaped by that person's style, as well as by ongoing projects and other significant activities that continue to relate to the person in some way.

Similar contrasts apply to experiences of places and objects, such as possessions, a prominent example being photographs. Consider this passage from William Maxwell's semi-autobiographical novel, *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, where the narrator reflects on a photograph of his mother:

> This picture didn't satisfy my father either, and he got the photographer who had taken it to touch it up so she would look more like a mature woman. The result was something I was quite sure my mother had never looked like—vague and idealized and as if she might not even remember who we were. My mother sometimes got excited and flew off the handle, but not this woman, who died before her time, leaving a grief-stricken husband and three motherless children. The retouched photograph came between me and the face I remembered, and it got harder and harder to recall my mother as she really was. (1980/2012, 11–12)

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The problem that concerns Maxwell is not just that the image is inaccurate; it also interferes with a sense of *this particular person* that is different in kind. Of course, that is not always so with photographs, which can equally be consistent with or even evoke an experience of someone's style. And, where they are lacking, it will sometimes be for other reasons. Nevertheless, there remain cases where the determinate image is discrepant with and interferes with one's sense of the person, with their style.[15] Flaherty and Throop (2018, 162) suggest that something not unlike this can also be involved in seeing the body of the deceased and, more specifically, the face: "Palpably diminished, no longer looking like itself, no longer being itself, in death the face we once intimately 'knew' has vanished from view." Drawing on the work of Levinas, they propose that this experience of lack is not just a matter of altered appearance. Rather, it is about possibilities that were integral to one's experience of the living face, in virtue of which it "always exceeds the physical features made manifest through its corporeal configuration."

What I have sought to describe in this chapter is not just a way of *experiencing* the dead; it also involves a certain, distinctive way *of being affected*. By considering how the dead are experienced, we are thus led toward a wider consideration of self-affecting ways of *relating* to them. This is the topic of chapter 6, where I will also provide an account of the *object* of grief, what grief is directed *at*.

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6 Retention and Loss

In the previous chapter, I showed how the experience of a person's *presence* can consist in a distinctive way of being affected, involving changes in the possibilities offered by one's surroundings. Such experiences can be fleeting or long-lasting, pronounced or subtle. In the context of bereavement, they sometimes amount to a sustained sense of connection with the deceased. This chapter turns to the complementary view that the bereaved often maintain *continuing* bonds with the deceased, rather than ultimately *letting go* or *moving on*. I identify a number of different ways in which one might be said to continue a bond and also consider whether it is *obligatory*, in some circumstances, to do so. I go on to emphasize the philosophical significance of continuing bonds. In philosophy and cognitive science, work on interpersonal and social cognition tends to consider only how we think about and relate to the living. Inclusion of the various ways in which we relate to the dead, experience and think of the dead, and regulate our experiences, thoughts, and activities through enduring attachments to the dead promises to broaden, diversify, and enrich this field of research.

Although I endorse the view that we often continue to feel connected to those who have died, I also suggest that the distinction between retaining a bond and letting go requires further refinement. The view that grief involves ultimately severing a bond is often attributed to Freud, among others. However, letting go of an experiential world that depended on the deceased need not amount to losing all sense of ongoing connection with the deceased. We can interpret Freud's position in terms of the former, rather than in terms of both, rendering the nature and extent of the disagreement unclear.

The chapter concludes by developing an account of grief's object—what it is that grief is about or *directed at*. I propose that what we experience as *lost* is not principally a concrete entity but a cohesive arrangement of significant

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possibilities. These include possibilities that were "mine," "yours," and "ours," the three being inextricable. Given this, what is lost can equally be described in terms of the death of a person, that person being dead, the loss or reconfiguration of a relationship, or the implications for one's own life. Hence, there is no single, concrete object of grief. To further support this position, I consider experiences of loss associated with involuntary childlessness, which illustrate how a sense of loss can arise without the subtraction of anything concrete from one's world. Although grief in response to the death of a person may differ from such experiences in many ways, I argue that it shares this structure; both are oriented toward the possible.

6.1 Kinds of Continuing Bonds

In chapter 5, I suggested that a sense of being in the presence of a particular person can involve being affected in a certain, distinctive way. Thus, it does not require a perceptual or perception-like experience of an entity being physically present in the surrounding environment. Instead, there is a feeling of connection that instills one's own experience and thought with dynamism and openness. Experiences of this kind are likely to play an important role in the development and sustenance of what have become known as "continuing bonds." The continuing bonds approach to bereavement spans a variety of largely complementary perspectives and claims. Together, they challenge a view that has become orthodox in some cultures, according to which grief ultimately involves severing a bond with the deceased—letting go or moving on. Instead, it is proposed, the bereaved generally maintain a sense of connection with those who have died, in ways that are interpersonally and culturally diverse. Since the publication of an influential volume in 1996, edited by Dennis Klass, Phyllis Silverman, and Steven Nickman, the continuing bonds alternative has grown markedly in visibility and popularity. The overarching claim is not simply that some or all features of a relationship with a living person are *preserved* after that person's death. Sustaining a connection with the deceased also involves *altering* how one thinks about and relates to that person; the relationship is reconstructed in such a way that it remains viable. So, although the relationship may be changed markedly, it is not altogether lost. As Thomas Attig (2011, 174) writes, the deaths of those we love "challenge us to maintain

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meaningful connection and to integrate redefined relationships in our necessarily new life patterns."

Talk of continuing bonds accommodates considerable interpersonal, social, and cultural diversity. Even in cultures where the alternative view that we sever ties with the deceased is well established (at least in academic circles), proponents of continuing bonds approaches maintain that it fails to reflect how most people in those cultures actually think and act. Even so, the prevalence of narratives that emphasize letting go of the deceased will influence how people experience and interpret an ongoing sense of connection. The kinds of bonds we develop are also acknowledged to be historically variable. For example, Walter (2019, 389) suggests that Western societies are currently undergoing a "new integration of the dead into everyday life," aided by technological innovations, as when a bereaved person writes on the Facebook page of the deceased and the post is read by others. There is further diversity among individuals within any given culture. The age and gender of the bereaved, the nature of the relationship, the specific qualities of that relationship, the bereaved person's wider social situation and background, the circumstances of the death, and the availability of interpretive resources will all influence the kinds of bonds that arise and how those bonds are understood, both by the bereaved and by others.

Experiences of enduring connection are usually experienced positively, although they are sometimes unwelcome and/or associated with distress. Responses to the phenomenological survey that I have drawn on throughout this book complement the literature on continuing bonds, in pointing to various different ways of experiencing and relating to those who have died. For some respondents, any bond that remains is largely a matter of the significance of memories: "I only feel a connection to him based on my memories" (#8). Others emphasize an enduring love that involves frequent thoughts of the deceased: "I feel a connection in terms of the fact I still love my parents, I think of them all the time" (#11). Another recurrent theme is an enduring *feeling* of connection, which need not involve experiences with more concrete contents: "I cannot see him, but I still feel him with me" (#17); "I do still feel a connection, I feel like I'm still married to him" (#46). There are also references to dreams and their effects: "My dreams quite often feature my husband, and they are usually positive dreams and I wake up happy with whatever I can remember of them" (#180).

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As well as perception-like experiences, memories, thoughts, dreams, and feelings of connection or presence, there are reports of continuing communication. This can involve talking to the deceased, sometimes in particular situations or at certain times: "I still feel connected to D and talk to her in my head" (#40); "His ashes are in the study; I talk to them when I get overwhelmed, and I feel better" (#44). Sometimes, but not always, there is a sense of reciprocity: "I talk to him regularly and I can hear him reply to me" (#72). Continuing bonds also contribute to people's lives in practical ways. For instance, memories of the person who died can shape how one currently experiences and relates to the world. This sometimes involves taking on attributes of the person: "She lives in me, in my memories of her and the intricacy of how we were together" (#133). Some respondents describe calling upon the person in certain situations and receiving advice or guidance: "I always refer to him mentally when there's a decision to make" (#107); "I have been doing some decorating and he tells me when I am doing it wrong or the best way to do it" (#102). A sense of being cared for or supported by the deceased can also involve experiencing objects or events in terms of communications or signs: "If I feel I need advice, comfort, or reassurance I nearly always see a white feather close by and that is when I feel my husband's presence and that he is looking out for me" (#118).

Testimonies such as these complement a substantial body of work on continuing bonds, which documents various different combinations of perceptual experiences, memories, patterns of thought, dream contents, meanings attached to objects and events, interpretations of events as signs or symbols, activities (including commemorative activities), rituals and other practices, one- or two-way communication with the person who died, internalization of their values, and being guided or supported by them (Klass, Silverman, and Nickman 1996; Klass and Steffen 2018). Common to different kinds of bonds is an enduring *feeling* of connection, which is not always attributable to the more specific contents of emotions, memories, thoughts, perceptual experiences, or imaginings:

> An internal connection. That's where he continues. A very positive and comforting feeling. (#13)

> I always feel he is with me and is safe and secure within my heart. (#107)

> When I am home alone, I feel connected to him. I can't be clear, but I think about him and relate to him in my mind as if he is still here. (#75)

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> I'm happy to have an ongoing connection. It's a constant and I want that feeling to continue. (#93)

As suggested in chapter 5, we can conceive of such *feelings* in terms of the distinctive *style* of the person who has died and how it continues to shape one's sense of the possible, in ways that might be episodic or enduring, localized, or all-enveloping.

Like our relations with the living, continuing bonds are not static; they change over time in ways that can enhance or diminish them: "My relationship with C has continued to grow and develop since her death. Far from it fading, I feel even more in love with her than I ever have" (#18). Others are equivocal over whether a bond remains. For instance, there may be an enduring connection in memory, alongside a sense of the person's irrevocable absence from the present: "I'd say I just feel a loss. I still feel close to my memories of her and I pray that they don't fade. But I feel strongly that she has absolutely gone" (#189). Whether and how bonds develop over time depends in part on what one does (and is able to do) in order to maintain, alter, or lose them. For instance, activities such as visiting particular places may foster a sense of connection: "I talk to him all the time and visit his resting place to feel the connection" (#28); "I have a memorial bench in the grounds where we married, I feel very close to him there" (#57).

Continuing bonds should not be conceived of in isolation from wider society and culture, simply as attachments that one individual has to another individual. Our relations with the living and the dead are entwined, such that interactions with other people, against the backdrop of larger social and cultural arrangements, contribute to generating, sustaining, enhancing, transforming, and weakening bonds with the dead (Walter 1999). In chapter 5, I discussed how the sense of interpersonal connection involves an experience of changing *possibilities*. This also applies to continuing relations with the living, which can shape our sense of relational possibilities involving the dead. Higgins (2013, 175) thus remarks on how sharing and coauthoring stories about the deceased can open up possibilities involving that person, augmenting one's sense of *who* they were: "Part of the value of jointly working out a story about the deceased is that it enriches each person's conception of the lost person. It reawakens and even enhances everyone's sense of what the person was really like."

Such interactions are shaped and regulated by social and cultural contexts that include the likes of shared practices, rituals, monuments, established

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narratives, and anniversaries. Objects such as personal possessions and the activities associated with them also have important roles to play. In her book, *Objects of the Dead*, Margaret Gibson describes how various objects act as reminders of the dead. As such, they can nurture connections and help to establish a person's enduring place in one's life: "For those who outlive a loved one, the objects that remain are significant memory traces and offer a point of connection with the absent body of the deceased" (Gibson 2008, 2). In chapters 2 and 3, we saw how arrangements of objects can be experienced as retaining significant possibilities, even though one *knows* that those possibilities have ceased to apply—*we* can no longer sit on the sofa, go for a drive in the car, read those books together, take the fishing rod down to the river, or watch television together. So, an experiential world endures, at least in part, despite explicit acknowledgment of its impossibility. However, although various possibilities associated with shared projects and pastimes no longer apply, other possibilities relate more closely to a person's distinctive style—to what it was like to interact with her, to memories involving her, to what she liked to do, to *who* she was. Such possibilities can be sustained in ways that do not conflict with one's current reality, something that may involve integrating significant objects into one's ongoing life and relating to them in new ways. As Gibson observes, objects associated with the dead are scattered throughout our lives—they are worn, used, displayed, and stored away.

On occasion, an object such as a cherished personal possession can evoke an especially pronounced sense of a particular person, their *style*. For example, my father was an avid birdwatcher, who took me on frequent trips to nature reserves when I was a child, where he would sit peering through his binoculars until long after I became bored. Recently, my mother gave me his binoculars, so that my two children could use them. As I opened the leather case containing them, I was immediately struck by their appearance, their texture as I picked them up, their weight (a little heavier than I had expected), and a subtle but distinctive smell. It had been over twenty years since my father's death. Yet, as I held them, I was taken back to a time before his many years of debilitating illness, to a way of relating to him, being with him, that I could not have summoned in their absence and that I had not felt for a long time. The experience did not involve any pronounced emotions. In fact, it was subdued, even peaceful—a diffuse, oddly mundane sense of what it was to be in his company, of *who* he was.

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In the event of a death, there is often a lengthy and complicated process of deciding what can and should be done with possessions, which can contribute to determining the kinds of bonds that are cultivated. This is not just a matter of making personal choices and sometimes negotiating with others. There are also established norms associated with what to keep, sell, or give away, sometimes involving a sense of obligation; it seems right to sell the house but to keep the ring and to donate the clothes to charity (Gibson 2008).

Even with shared practices and interpretive resources, experiences of connection can be difficult to understand and describe. A nonlocalized sense of being affected by someone is not adequately conveyed in terms of a more determinate sensory experience of that person. Furthermore, a sense of presence can be incomplete and is sometimes ambivalent or conflicted. One experiences some possibilities associated with a person's presence but not others. Furthermore, properties indicative of presence might be experienced alongside others that are indicative of memory or imagination. Hence, such experiences are not captured by unqualified talk of someone seeming to be there. Indeed, I will suggest in chapter 7 that a person's continuing presence, in the form of a *style*, can contribute to an ability to cope with that same person's absence from the world.[1]

One might think that, in all cases, a continuing bond at least incorporates some sense of currently relating, having related, or being able to relate to the deceased *as* present. However, there is another, quite different form of experience, which could equally be termed a continuing bond. What makes it distinctive is that one relates to the person who has died not as currently or formerly present but *as currently absent*. Experiences like this are especially challenging to describe. They do not involve a tension between simultaneous experiences of presence and absence. Neither do they involve the presence of an absence, as when Pierre fails to arrive in Sartre's café. There is an enduring connection, but of a kind that does not involve turning current absence into an impoverished presence. One continues to relate to the person *in the present*, but in a manner that includes full recognition that she has gone. For example, Helen Humphreys (2013), in her memoir *True Story: The Life and Death of My Brother*, addresses her brother as "you" throughout, sometimes referring to the time "after you died." She relates to him and reaches out to him, while acknowledging his death in the same sentence.

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In *Time Lived without Its Flow*, Denise Riley provides an especially detailed and evocative account of the type of experience I have in mind here. Unlike the self-affecting sense of presence identified in chapter 5, what Riley describes is a self-affecting experience of her son's irrevocable *absence*. She has an enduring connection with him, but not one that enriches her world with new possibilities. Instead, by continuing to relate to her son while at the same time fully recognizing his own complete loss of possibilities, she participates in his absent future. As discussed in chapter 4, this also amounts to an alteration of temporal experience. Riley describes residing in an endless present, cut off from the progressive unfolding of shared time by a kind of participation in death: "I tried always to be there for him, solidly. And I shall continue to be. (The logic of this conviction: in order to be there, I too have died)" (2012, 21). There is thus an ongoing bond, which involves relating to the deceased by participating in the impossibility of new possibilities: "You already share the 'timeless time' of the dead child. As if you'd died too, or had lost the greater part of your own life" (2012, 38). Other first-person accounts point to similar experiences. For instance, consider this passage from Adri van der Heijden's memoir, *Tonio*, which reflects on an enduring love for his son:

> My love for him is still there, and more intensely than it used to be. Grammatically, it makes no sense at all. If, under duress, I say, "I love him," then what *him* am I talking about? Tonio no longer exists as *him*. He *existed* (and how!) in what now is past tense. And yet I love him, like I used to love him.
>
> My love is genuine and sincere, but it has to make do without an object. (2015, 448)

The love is not directed at someone in the past; he continues to love his son in the present. But how can this be, given that his love also includes recognition of absence? Again, there is an enduring sense of connection with the person *as* absent.

Interestingly, Riley's account draws on the theme of touch and reversibility in Merleau-Ponty's writings, in an attempt to further convey the experience of relating to someone as absent (e.g., Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 1968). In brief, when one of your hands touches the other, the touching hand is the subject of perception or perceiver, while the touched hand is an object of perception. However, the relationship is reversible; the touching hand becomes the touched, as the other hand takes on the role of perceiver. Similarly, when you take the hand of another person, your own hand is the

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perceiver and theirs the perceived. And, as with your own two hands, the relationship is reversible. There is thus a sense of the other hand—and the other person—as a distinct locus of experience. Riley indicates that a comparable experience of reversibility can characterize relations with the dead:

> Whatever's the name for this transfer of affect? It's rather like that blurring of physical edges that happens between lovers: you become the other one, you can feel as if through their skin. . . . You're fused with the dead, as if to animate them. They draw you across to their side, while you incorporate them on your side. (Riley 2012, 39–40)[2]

According to Riley, this kind of experience is specific to parental grief and far from unusual among bereaved parents. However, less pronounced experiences of a similar kind may characterize grief more generally. This complicates the interpretation of remarks such as "I died with her" and "part of me has died," which could refer to either of two importantly different aspects of grief. An experience of connection with someone's absence, which dislodges one from the world, is to be distinguished from a diminishment of one's world due to that person's absence from it.

It is thus clear that the bereaved *do* maintain a variety of different bonds with those who have died. However, the question remains as to whether and how we *ought* to experience and relate to the dead. Klass (2006) regards the notion of a "continuing bond" as descriptive rather than normative. It identifies what actually happens when people die, as opposed to what ought or ought not to happen. To this, it can be added that continuing bonds envelop a range of phenomena and so the focus of discussion varies, in ways that are not always made explicit (Epstein, Kalus, and Berger 2006). Hence, claims concerning the appropriateness or inappropriateness of bonds in general are likely to prove insufficiently discerning.

In practice, continuing bonds are shaped and also "policed" by a range of different social and cultural norms (Walter 1999). They are not simply decontextualized attachments. Rather, they are elicited, sustained, and regulated within wider cultural and religious frameworks, which include shared interpretive resources for making sense of how someone can be gone but not simply absent, or still present but in a different way. For instance, Klass (1996, 59) considers Japanese ancestor worship, which involves "an elaborate set of rituals, supported by a sophisticated theory, by which those who are living maintain personal, emotional bonds with those who have died." It could be that contexts of rituals, practices, concepts, and narratives

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merely support the interpretation of experiences of connection. But it is also arguable that they contribute to the experiences themselves. Whether we endorse one position, the other, or both depends, in part, on whether a liberal or more conservative account of experiential content is adopted. So long as it is conceded that people experience entities of various types, along with significant ways in which those entities relate to one another, it is plausible to maintain that the actual content of an experience can be influenced by the social and cultural context in which it arises, which includes shared interpretive practices. In addition, whether or not an experience is beneficial will depend, to some extent, on whether or not it is consistent with and approved of within an established, shared cultural framework (Steffen and Coyle 2012).[3]

It has been proposed that some types of bonds are generally harmful or "maladaptive," in a specifically clinical sense that does not depend upon one or another contingent cultural arrangement. This is said to apply, in particular, to certain *externalized* bonds that involve illusions and/or hallucinations. In such cases, there is a failure to appreciate that the deceased "exists exclusively at the representational level" and thus to maintain a "boundary between the living and the dead," at least where the relevant experiences occur outside of culturally established rituals (Field 2006, 751).[4] However there is a need for caution here. We saw in chapter 5 how experiences of being affected by the *style* of the deceased, which are sometimes classified as hallucinations, do not need to locate that person anywhere in particular (whether internal or external to oneself). Hence, they do not conform to a distinction between internalized and externalized bonds. For instance, one might have an experience of being comforted by the deceased, here and now, without any clear sense of where that person is. Furthermore, an experience of presence can be equivocal. Although it incorporates certain possibilities associated with perceptual experiences, it also lacks others. The distinction between internal and external therefore fails to capture the subtlety or diversity of sensed-presence experiences. For example, Klass (1999, 41) describes how the relationships that bereaved parents sustain with their deceased children can have "the character of both inner and outer reality"; they do not experience their children as a straightforwardly "objective presence" or as "simply subjective."

Thus, in order to evaluate claims about maladaptive bonds, further clarification is required concerning their nature.[5] It could be that what singles

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them out is a failure of "integration" (Field and Filanosky 2009, 24). However, that claim risks being uninformative, unless the types of bonds that are likely to involve such a failure can be characterized independently of it. And it is not clear that they can be. Continuing bonds of various kinds will contribute to people's lives in different ways, in different circumstances. So, a type of bond that enhances the life of one person may not enhance the life of another, due to their differing situations, backgrounds, and life structures. It can be added that the qualities of a continuing bond are likely to reflect, to a large extent, the particularities of one's relationship with a person before they died and, sometimes, the circumstances of the death.[6] Where a relationship was always fraught with difficulties, those difficulties are likely to persist in some way. As Stroebe and Schut (2005, 482) observe, "insecure, dependent, or conflicted bonding" can equally characterize both pre- and post-death relationships. So, it seems unlikely that a broad type of bond (e.g., one involving an experience of ongoing communication with the deceased) will affect people in consistent ways. All we can say with confidence is that some kinds of continuing bonds are sometimes comforting and/or helpful and sometimes distressing and/or harmful.

It is therefore difficult to make any confident normative claims concerning continuing bonds. They are evaluated and shaped by a diversity of social and cultural norms. Furthermore, it is not clear that wider-ranging claims concerning which *types* of bonds are beneficial or otherwise can be sustained. However, there is a final possibility that I want to consider. Perhaps, regardless of what might be said about bonds of one or another type, it is at least clear that we ought—under certain circumstances—to maintain *some kind* of continuing bond. I am thinking here of a specifically moral claim. The issue of whether and when it is right to form a continuing bond is closely related to that of whether, when, and how we ought to grieve for someone. Grief, it could be argued, is not just something we actually experience; it is also something we ought to experience sometimes. To be more specific, grieving for someone we love seems morally obligatory. McCracken (2005, 141) proposes that this sense of obligation arises because grief is "felt to be *dedicated*" to the "*lost object*," Given that grief is dedicatory and the deceased merits our dedication, we ought to grieve.

One might object that any sense of obligation applies instead to the performance of certain activities and therefore to mourning practices rather than the emotional experience of grief. However, McCracken suggests that

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it applies equally to grief, which is something we *ought to feel* on occasion. Even if this is correct, it will not apply to all instances of grief. Sometimes, there is plausibly no fact of the matter over whether we should grieve in a particular way or even at all. Suppose that one person experiences grief upon hearing of an old friend's death, while another experiences only brief sadness, even though they both had friendships with the deceased that were comparable in almost every respect. It is not clear that one of them has got things right and the other wrong. Nevertheless, there are many occasions when it does seem plausible to maintain that someone *ought to* grieve. So, let us focus on those.

Drawing on McCracken's discussion, Solomon (2004b, 81) suggests that grief involves a "continuation rather than a cessation of love." Thus, consistent with a continuing bonds approach, the relationship does not end with the death. There remains what Solomon calls "the strong residue" of a relationship, and it is from this enduring love that obligations stem. Thus, if it is true that we ought to grieve, then it is also true that we ought to form continuing bonds. However, it is important to distinguish three claims: (a) grief is obligatory; (b) grief involves continuing bonds; and (c) continuing bonds are obligatory. The truth of (a) need not depend on (b) or (c), given that grief and associated activities might seem obligatory in light of a bond that one once had but no longer has:

> I feel as though I need to live my best life for him and I remember him every day, he's always going to be a part of my life, but more because of the memories and the fact that I miss him than because there's a connection. (#49)

There is also a need to further clarify which aspects of grief are obligatory and why. We have already seen that intuitions concerning the appropriateness of grief do not always concern *moral* appropriateness. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, a grief process is integral to the recognition and accommodation of loss. So, an appeal to moral obligation is not required in order to understand why the relevant aspects of grief ought to arise. They are already *implied* by what has happened, at least under the assumption that a life structure is ultimately to be reconciled with the fact of bereavement. Thus, for the claim that grief is morally obligatory to be plausible, it must relate to other aspects of a grief process and how it unfolds. However, grief encompasses a diversity of experiences, thoughts, and activities, including many other emotions. What, exactly, are we obliged to feel, think, or do, and under what circumstances? To further complicate matters, numerous

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nonmoral norms influence our responses to bereavement, including legal and religious norms, as well as norms of etiquette (such as what to wear and how to behave at a funeral). More specific commitments are also made to the deceased, sometimes stemming from explicit promises to honor wishes. Once all of this is taken into consideration, it is not clear what remains to be accounted for under the general category of "moral obligations that apply in the case of bereavement."

Furthermore, although perceived obligations often *are* associated with enduring relationships, continuing obligations do not *imply* continuing bonds. As Solomon (2004b, 93) acknowledges, having a desire satisfied does not always require experiencing its satisfaction. Indeed, some desires concern states of affairs that will only arise after one's own death. One could even spend a whole lifetime working toward something while knowing that it will not be realized until long after one has died. Where a person's desire can still be satisfied even after that person has died, there remains the possibility of our striving to satisfy it. This is sometimes a matter of respecting the *wishes* of the deceased, but not always. For instance, we might know that they would never have wanted us to do *p*, given that *p* involves a great deal of effort or involves our incurring certain costs. And yet doing *p* still seems right. It could involve respecting their wishes in a wider sense, perhaps by bringing about something that they valued, rather than doing what they explicitly wanted. Doing something in response to a desire or a wish need not involve a sense of obligation toward the deceased. One might instead feel *inspired* to act in a particular way—to internalize certain values or to take on projects and make them one's own (in a way that would not generally be *expected* of a person in one's position). Commemorative activities and the like can thus stem from different kinds of attachments, commitments, and motivations. Not all of these require that one continue to love the deceased. Suppose that loving a person at one time is associated with a commitment to satisfying some of their desires by doing something at a much later date. It is not clear that subsequently honoring one's commitment need involve still loving that person. It is equally compatible with continuing to value a relationship that *was*, where satisfying or failing to satisfy certain desires is integral to the overall story of that relationship and, more specifically, to the significance of what was said and done in the past. Valuing a past relationship also involves valuing *how* it is remembered (McCracken 2005, 145). And what one feels, thinks, says, and does now can change the significance of

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past events, in ways that enhance or detract from the remembered relationship. So, a current sense of obligation does not require a continuing bond; it could involve retaining a bond or, alternatively, valuing a bond that was.[7]

Hence, there are no straightforward generalizations to be found concerning the obligation to grieve or to maintain one or another type of bond. More plausibly, what is experienced as obligatory in a given situation involves a degree of particularity, as does what might *actually* be obligatory in that situation. Relevant considerations include the nature of the relationship, the circumstances of the death, one's relations with other people, the biography of the person who died, and the structure of one's own life. Some obligations stem from bonds, but they are not themselves obligations to maintain bonds. In life, people are not ordinarily *obliged* to continue with relationships indefinitely or to insulate those relationships from substantial change. The same applies in the context of bereavement.

6.2 The Bounds of Social Cognition

I have indicated some of the ways in which philosophical (and more specifically phenomenological) research can cast light on the nature of continuing bonds and the norms associated with them. To this, it should be added that a consideration of continuing bonds also points to the prospect of enriching and diversifying work on social cognition in philosophy and cognitive science. For the most part, this field of interdisciplinary research has concerned itself solely with how we relate to the living. The scope of discussion can be broadened by further acknowledging the many ways in which we relate to the dead. This is not just a matter of supplementing existing areas of research; it also points to a need to rethink certain conceptions of how we experience, understand, and relate to the living.

It is arguable that recent work on social cognition has placed too much emphasis on a certain ability: attributing beliefs and desires to other people, in order to predict and explain their behavior. For the most part, discussions of belief-desire psychology take for granted that this is an adequate description of something we do and, furthermore, that it identifies what is most central to social cognition. The focus of debate has instead been on whether it is accomplished by "simulating" another person's situation and/or mental processes, by employing a "theory of mind," or through some combination of the two (e.g., Davies and Stone 1995a, 1995b). If the

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primacy of belief-desire psychology is assumed, then our relations with the dead would seem to be of little additional interest. When thinking about what someone might have said or done were they still alive, we use the same simulation mechanisms or theory that we would have used were they alive but not perceptually present. And, if we think of them as still having beliefs and desires after their death, we are employing these same cognitive abilities, but in a manner that is removed from any behavioral evidence. Hence, how we understand and relate to the dead might be regarded as—at most—a peripheral issue for social cognition research.

However, others have challenged this emphasis on belief-desire psychology, by drawing on themes in phenomenology, developmental psychology, and other fields (e.g., Gallagher 2005, 2020; Ratcliffe 2007; De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007; Hutto 2008; Colombetti and Torrance 2009). It has been argued that much of our social interaction does not depend on belief-desire psychology. In addition, even where belief-desire psychology is at work, it is just one aspect of social cognition, which should not be ascribed undue importance. We ordinarily make sense of others' activities against the backdrop of a shared social world, where artifacts have established functions, people have prescribed roles, and behavior is regulated by shared norms. Immersion in this world makes a substantial contribution to our ability to interpret, anticipate, and explain other people's behavior, a contribution that is neither reducible to nor somehow secondary to belief-desire psychology. A further criticism is that we understand others *through* our relations and interactions with them. Much of the literature on belief-desire psychology assumes that, when addressing and interacting with someone in a second-person way, we rely on the same cognitive mechanisms that are involved in the detached scrutiny of their behavior. Contrary to this, it is arguable that interacting with someone as a "you," in a manner that involves *feelings of connection*, differs in important respects from the disengaged, third-person attribution of mental states. For example, when relating to a "you," it matters *who* that person is, not just what kind of thing they are and what mental states they have. Second-person experience is essentially a way of relating to someone as *this particular person*, something that is not captured by the attribution of mental states to one or another token of the type "possessor of mental states" (Ratcliffe 2015, chap. 8).

The extent to which such approaches pose a challenge to orthodox accounts of our everyday or "folk" psychology is debatable, and I do not seek

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to resolve the matter here.[8] But what I do want to suggest is that an overemphasis on belief-desire psychology leads to a highly selective account of how we experience, understand, interact with, and relate to other people. This is evident in reflecting on the phenomenology of grief and, more specifically, continuing bonds. For instance, in turning to sensed-presence experiences, we can see how distinctively *interpersonal* experience involves a certain way of being affected, along with a sense of particularity that does not apply to entities of other kinds. An emphasis on belief-desire psychology fails to capture this. In addition, experiences of grief reflect the many different ways in which other people are implicated in our lives; they contribute to a sense of who we are, shape and reshape our experiences of possibilities, and guide our actions. Furthermore, as argued in chapters 2 and 3, the world we take for granted when attributing mental states to other people itself depends on established relationships with particular individuals, while at the same time serving as a backdrop against which we anticipate, encounter, and interpret other people in general. In chapter 7, I will show how grief also makes salient the manner in which we rely on others to *regulate* our emotions, activities, and patterns of thought, both during times of upheaval and throughout the course of everyday life. Grief thus reveals the extent to which human lives are interpersonally structured. Other people are not simply *things* of a distinctive type, which we encounter and interpret. They are integral in various ways to an orientation through which we experience and engage with the world. Broadening social cognition research to accommodate grief and continuing bonds therefore requires acknowledging the many ways in which we experience, think about, and relate to the dead, while at the same reconceptualizing our relations with the living.

6.3 Letting Go

I have endorsed the view that the bereaved maintain continuing bonds of various kinds with the dead. However, this need not involve wholesale rejection of the view that grief involves severing bonds and moving on. As we have seen, the term "continuing bonds" encompasses various different ways of experiencing, thinking about, and relating to those who have died, all of which could be described in terms of "letting go" of certain things while "holding on" to others. If the alternative consisted of *severing all ties* with the deceased, then a straightforward contrast could be drawn,

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with continuing bonds in all their diversity on one side and letting go of the deceased on the other. But matters are not so clear. Indeed, it may be more fruitful to regard the two approaches as having different but potentially complementary emphases. In earlier chapters, I distinguished two broad aspects of grief: (a) the way in which an experiential world is reorganized over time so as to accommodate loss and (b) how one experiences and relates to the deceased. Continuing bonds approaches are preoccupied largely with (b), whereas the view that grief involves "letting go" can be thought of primarily in terms of (a). Suppose that one has adjusted to a loss, to the extent that one no longer experiences or interacts with the surrounding world in ways that implicate the deceased. One has—we might say—*let go* of a life structure in which that person was central. Nevertheless, a sense of the person's *style*, the distinctive manner in which she shaped one's possibilities and vice versa, is not exhausted by a comprehensive inventory of all the specific ways in which she contributed to one's life. It is indeterminate, nonlocalized, and irreducible to any number of roles in any number of situations. Given this, it retains the potential to endure.

Hence, there are importantly different ways in which people *matter* to us. Where a disruption of our practical concerns is temporary, concern for the person who has died need not be. The contrast between maintaining a bond and letting go is, I suggest, at least partly symptomatic of a failure to distinguish these types of concern and thus to make clear what *letting go of someone* amounts to. For instance, Bowlby (1980/1998, 25) refers to a consensus view that healthy grief involves "in some degree at least, a withdrawal of emotional investment in the lost person." This could be construed in terms of severing a bond altogether, but it does not have to be. There are emotional investments of different kinds; disengaging from projects, commitments, pastimes, and habits that one shared with the deceased (which have become unsustainable) is not the same as disengaging from the deceased altogether.

These two broad types of concern can be more or less prominent at different points during a grief process. Where one's own life structure depended substantially on the deceased, disruption of that structure might be conspicuous initially, in the guise of contrasts and conflicts between worlds, a sense of unreality, and a tension-riddled interplay between presence and absence. However, as new structure is established, what may then become more prominent is an enduring relationship with the deceased, along with

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an enduring sense of what has been lost. These two aspects of grief are often distinguished, although there is no consistent terminology for doing so. Rosenfeld (2020, 10) appeals to a distinction between "grief" and "mourning," suggesting that they are "fundamentally *different* emotions, the latter only reachable after the former in some way departs." The initial grief is preoccupied (in part, at least) with what has happened to oneself, inhibiting a sense of enduring connection that arises later: "Three long years or so after his death, he would begin to come back to me, but in a different way—as an alive but dead man. He began to *be* again, which I now see as the mourning beginning" (Rosenfeld 2020, 232).

As Rosenfeld observes, we find something like this in the writings of Freud, who is often ascribed a central role in establishing the "severing bonds" narrative. In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud describes a process of detaching oneself from the deceased, which involves dynamic tensions between retaining and letting go of the attachment, culminating—at least typically—in detachment:

> So what is the work that mourning performs? I do not think I am stretching a point if I present it in the following manner: reality-testing has revealed that the beloved object no longer exists, and demands that the libido as a whole sever its bonds with that object. An understandable tendency arises to counter this—it may be generally observed that people are reluctant to abandon a libido position, even if a substitute is already beckoning. (Freud 1917/2005, 204)[9]

This passage could be interpreted in terms of letting go of the person or, alternatively, letting go of a life structure that has become unsustainable. If we opt for the latter, it is largely consistent with what I described in chapters 2 and 3 (setting aside terminological differences). In light of a bereavement, an experiential world that implicates the deceased in various ways is no longer sustainable. Yet one cannot simply abandon that world instantaneously. And so it persists, in a way that conflicts with explicit propositional acceptance of the death. Over time, there is alternation between what we might call "denial" and "acceptance." In this way, patterns of habitual expectation are altered, such that the structure of one's life eventually ceases to depend on the deceased. So, there is a progressive detachment from the relationship, of a kind that Freud refers to here: "Each individual memory and expectation in which the libido was connected to the object is adjusted and hyper-invested, leading to its detachment from the libido" (1917/2005,

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205). Although Freud describes the ego as "free and uninhibited" once this detachment has been accomplished, it need not be construed in terms of letting go of someone entirely. The process is compatible with retaining a kind of relationship that no longer conflicts with the realities of one's situation, something that can also involve an enduring sense of loss. Consistent with this, Freud later distinguishes, in a letter to Binswanger, whose fourteen-year-old son had recently died, an "acute sorrow" that will come to an end from an inconsolability that will endure (Rosenfeld 2020, 224–225).[10]

We find a similar distinction in Lewis's *A Grief Observed*. Here, Lewis remarks on an initial preoccupation with self-directed concerns, something that is not only distinct from but—in his case—also opposed to an experience of enduring connection with the deceased:

> For, as I have discovered, passionate grief does not link us with the dead but cuts us off from them. This becomes clearer and clearer. It is just at those moments when I feel least sorrow—getting into my morning bath is usually one of them—that H. rushes upon my mind in her full reality, her otherness. (1961/1966, 47)

For Lewis, we might say that letting go is not merely compatible with an enduring connection but required for it. The salience of one kind of concern risks eclipsing the other.[11] A reconfiguration of one's practical concerns will inevitably involve abandoning certain aspects of a relationship, such as the anticipation of sitting on the sofa together or being greeted upon returning home. But the continuing bonds approach does not claim that relationships are preserved in their entirety. Instead, they persist in an altered form, and some important qualities of the earlier relationship are lost. So, having adjusted practically to the implications of a bereavement remains compatible with an enduring sense of loss, even as one experiences a continuing bond.

Hence, the contrast between retaining bonds and letting go is not so pronounced as it might seem. Sometimes, grief does involve ultimately letting go of a relationship altogether. However, where a connection remains, it is compatible with letting go in another way: ceasing to inhabit an experiential world that presupposes the deceased. There can also be tensions between these two aspects of grief, as when a preoccupation with one's own world interferes with one's experience of the person who has died. Nevertheless, they are aspects of the same process, rather than contrasting trajectories that the process might follow. Furthermore, given that continuing bonds encompass considerable variety, it would be better to think of interpersonal experience

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in grief in terms of numerous different combinations of retention and loss than in terms of a simple contrast between the two.

6.4 The Objects of Grief

Acknowledging the difference between two ways of "letting go" or "moving on" helps to deflate a philosophical problem concerning grief's subsiding over time. According to Moller (2007, 2017), empirical findings concerning *resilience* among the bereaved show that most of us recover surprisingly swiftly from bereavement.[12] At the same time, however, it seems that the loss of someone immensely important to us warrants a longer, more intense period of grief. Indeed, it can be further argued that *any* fading of grief is either irrational or rationally incomprehensible from a first-person perspective, given that the significance of one's loss does not change over time in the manner that grief does (Moller 2007, 2017; Marušić 2018).

Once the practical impact of a death upon one's life is distinguished from a type of concern that one had—and may continue to have—for the deceased, the diminution of grief is not so puzzling. Reorganizing a life to accommodate loss does not require severing all connections with the deceased. What Moller (2007, 310) calls "functional replacement" of the deceased with someone new (via, e.g., remarriage or having another child) need not add up to comprehensive replacement.[13] Similarly, Marušić's formulation of the puzzle does not distinguish between a specifically personal way in which someone can matter to us and another kind of mattering that diminishes over time: "It is the discrepancy between the duration of grief and the extent to which the loved one matters to us that gives rise to the puzzle" (Marušić 2018, 5). The problem is less pressing once we acknowledge that there are two different things at play here: a profound disruption of one's own life, to which one adjusts over time, and a concern for the deceased that may endure and also continue to enrich one's life.

However, this does not dispense with the problem entirely. Suppose we set aside any preoccupation with what has happened to one's own world. It is plausible to maintain that other aspects of grief, concerned specifically with the loss of the person, similarly diminish over time. For Moller (2007, 2017), the object of grief is there having been a loss, while Marušić (2018, 6) maintains that grief's "primary object" is a person's "*being dead*." Whichever the case, what grief is *about* does not change, at least not in a way that

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corresponds to the course of grief. So, if grief is both directed at and justified by its object, there remains the question of why it diminishes over time in the way it usually does, or even at all. Granted, all manner of psychological explanations might be given for why grief subsides and how this is beneficial to us. But they do not address the problem. Emotions in general are not only directed at their objects; they are also judged to be *appropriate* or *inappropriate* in light of their objects. For instance, being happy about a friend's traffic accident, angry with someone for offering a friendly greeting, or frightened of the slow-moving shopping trolley would ordinarily be deemed inappropriate. Other examples of inappropriateness involve a mismatch between the cause and object of an emotion, as when we become angry with someone because we have had a bad day. Even when a type of emotion is appropriate to its cause, it need not be *proportionate* to it. For instance, where anger is appropriate to a situation, the extent of one's anger could still be deemed excessive. Under the assumption that grief is both caused by the death of a person and directed at the loss of that person, we can similarly ask whether it is appropriate and proportionate. Such questions also apply to more specific features of grief, including its temporal structure. Hence, if grief's object is the reason for grief and that object is unchanging or does not change over time in the same way as grief, then grief's diminution is unresponsive to our reasons, regardless of whether or not it is pragmatically desirable (Marušić 2018). Furthermore, to the extent that the duration of our grief fails to reflect the value that the deceased had for us, there are grounds for regretting the extent of our resilience (Moller 2007, 315).

Whether or not such concerns are legitimate hinges on the object of grief. And it is by no means clear that grief's object, or at least its sole object, is the loss of a person or that person's being dead. Cholbi (2017a, 2022) proposes instead that grief is about the loss or radical alteration of an important *relationship*. When combined with his endorsement of a continuing bonds approach, this provides an apparent solution to the problems that concern Moller and Marušić. Adapting to the radical alteration of a relationship and working out how, if at all, that relationship can continue is a process that takes time (Cholbi 2019, 498). Furthermore, so long as grief does not culminate in a complete loss of the relationship, there need be no tension between the diminution of grief and the value of the relationship. However, it is arguable that this emphasis on the relationship does not

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capture the manner in which grief is also concerned with the person who has died, with what *that person* has lost. It is not enough to say, as Cholbi (2019, 496) does, that a bereavement is "a catalyst for a crisis in our relationship with them" and that grief is an emotional response geared toward sustaining the relationship in a modified form. The sense of loss concerns something more than that. Were this not the case, then sentiments along the lines of "I would give my own life to have her back" or "I wish I could trade places with her" would be incoherent, and it is not clear that they are.

I suggest instead that it is a mistake to conceive of a person's being dead, there having been a loss, and the loss or transformation of a relationship as rival candidate objects of grief. Grief does not have a singular, concrete object. What we experience and engage with over the course of a grief process is a *loss of possibilities*, aspects of which can be described in terms of various other, more specific objects. Hence, the overarching object of grief is not something concrete that has ceased to be—a person or a relationship.[14] To support this position, I will first consider experiences of loss associated with involuntary childlessness. As these experiences do not involve first having something concrete and then losing it, they serve to make explicit how a sense of loss is oriented toward the possible. Of course, one could respond that experiences of bereavement differ in this respect from experiences of childlessness. However, the next step in my argument will be to show that, regardless of any differences between the two, grief over the death of a person is equally a matter of experiencing and engaging with a loss of possibilities.

The phenomenological survey introduced in chapter 1 was concerned specifically with bereavement. However, to our surprise, we received twenty-nine responses that instead described grief over childlessness. Some of these respondents also remarked on a widespread failure to acknowledge experiences such as theirs (a point to which I will return in chapter 8). All were women, who had been directed to our research by a support network for childless women. However, similar experiences have also been reported by childless men (Hadley and Hanley 2011).[15] The distinction between experiences of loss over childlessness and experiences of loss associated with specific life events is not always clear. Some respondents also described feelings of loss relating to abortions, miscarriages, failed IVF treatments, other medical treatments, relationship breakups, and the deaths of relatives. However, in the twenty-nine accounts I refer to here, the primary focus, and in some cases the exclusive focus, was on being unable to have children. We could

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take the line that—strictly speaking—these are not in fact *loss* experiences, as nothing concrete was taken away from the person. Surely, there is a difference between an experience of losing something and an experience of never having had something. However, respondents consistently describe their sense of loss as both similar in kind and comparable in profundity to an experience of bereavement: "The grief over a person that someone has welcomed/wished for/loved in advance but was never there can be as devastating as the grief over the death of a person that has lived a real life" (#210); "I'm mourning the loss of my daughter I never had" (#209).

Even if one can be affected by childlessness to an *extent* that compares to a significant bereavement, this does not entail that the relevant experiences are similar in *kind*. Perhaps emotional responses to involuntary childlessness involve various combinations of disappointment, regret, sorrow, and longing, which together differ in some way from an experience of grief or loss? Instead, I suggest that, where something matters deeply to a person, two different scenarios are compatible with the same type of loss experience: (a) it was the case but is no longer the case, and (b) it was once anticipated but will never happen. Common to both is the sense of *lost possibilities*, which is a prominent theme in first-person descriptions of grief over childlessness:

> This is unlike any other grief I have experienced. Because I haven't actually lost a person but lost the life I thought I would have, which was children, it feels all-consuming. (#225)

> It is the loss of a dreamed-of future, a life you have imagined since you were a child. (#261)

> This is a lifetime dream since I was a little girl. And it is a loss of memories that would never happen, I couldn't get past, couldn't let go of, I could never experience. (#209)

> I am experiencing grief and loss around being unable to have children. I am grieving the future children I imagined and believed I would have but am unable to. (#262)

Hence, what is lost is a potential state of affairs, which was sought, anticipated, and also imagined in varying degrees of detail. Of course, that something fails to occur is not ordinarily a cause for grief, even when it was something highly desirable. For instance, my failing to win the lottery only ever elicits very mild disappointment, if that. An important difference, though, is that having a child was expected, at least for a time, perhaps

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with such confidence that the prospect of childlessness was not even contemplated. Furthermore, having children was something that respondents cared about deeply and actively sought. Even so, it remains the case that anticipating, caring about, and investing a lot in something does not always make its nonoccurrence a cause for grief. It may instead bring surprise, disappointment, sadness, frustration, disillusion, and demoralization. However, what does distinguish an experience of grief or loss is that the relevant possibilities are not associated merely with some envisaged future self but also with who one was and who one now is. Some testimonies refer to *becoming a different person*. It is not a matter of picking oneself up and embarking on new projects. Instead, one faces the task of reorganizing the structure of a life, including one's values, how one relates to others, what one strives for, and the categories that one falls under (which no longer include "future parent"):

> I live with the grief for the children I never had and the identity I lost as a result. (#223)

> This grief was the worst ever. It was the loss of my dreams and future. The loss of who I was meant to be. (#198)

> I am a completely different person. (#196)

> My identity has shifted gradually . . . which brings ease. (#223)

> Loss of one's identity as a mother and becoming a mother is endless. (#238)

Thus, recognition of the inability to become something can also affect *who* one is now.[16] The relevant sense of *self* or *identity* corresponds to what I have described in terms of life structure, practical identity, and the experiential world. The anticipation and pursuit of certain possibilities depends on values, projects, and commitments that are central to one's life. When those possibilities are recognized as counterfactual rather than futural, there is a change in *who one is*. This can involve "the death of an assumed way of life" (#253); the "collapse" of the "world as I knew it" (#258).[17] While some accounts of involuntary childlessness emphasize losing the possibility of loving a child, others indicate something different—*actually* loving a child who never came into being: "Although they never came to this world, I feel and know them as real, truly existing persons that I never will have the chance to get to know" (#210); "I felt I knew the baby, that it was a boy, and that he was waiting for me" (#233). Such testimonies are challenging

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to interpret. Is human experience structured in such a way that we can actually love someone who is no more than a counterfactual possibility? Alternatively, do people borrow narratives and ways of thinking from other contexts, perhaps including that of bereavement, so as to interpret and articulate a form of loss that is otherwise intangible?

More generally, it can be difficult to tease apart the self- and other-directed aspects of loss experiences. For instance, grief over the forced adoption of a child might concern what one has been denied, what one's child has been denied, or a relationship that was never allowed to develop. In contrast, we might think that an experience of lost bodily capacities, caused by chronic illness or serious injury, is straightforwardly self-directed. But it could also include an awareness of all the joint activities that one's children will now be denied. Likewise, a person's first thoughts upon losing a job might concern what others, especially family members, will lose as a consequence. Experiences of grief and loss can also involve conflicts between one's own life structure and that of someone else. In the case of a relationship breakup, one's life may be shaped by a concern for the other person's possibilities, while that person seeks to be free of one's concern in order to actualize her possibilities. Experiences of loss thus involve various different combinations of what I have lost, they have lost, and we have lost.

Despite their complexity and diversity, loss experiences share something in common: they involve recognizing and engaging with lost possibilities.[18] And this, I suggest, is equally central to grief in response to bereavement. It seems right to say that grief is about a death, about a person's being dead, *and* about the loss of a valued relationship. But consider a puzzle that applies to all three accounts of grief's object. What exactly is lost when someone dies? Suppose Person C dies at time 5. At this point, do we also lose C at earlier times 1, 2, 3, and 4? The answer, surely, is no. When C is a teenager, C as a baby is already gone. And, when C reaches the age of forty, C as a teenager is long gone. It seems wrong to insist that the loss over which we grieve includes the person at all life stages. Then again, it is just as implausible to maintain that we grieve only the loss of a current time-slice of whatever duration. The point applies equally to relationships, which change over time, often in radical ways. The relationship that one might have had with a newborn baby is quite different from the relationship one later has with a teenager. Granted, that relationship has changed over time and in some ways endured, but it also seems right to say that a

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certain *type* of relationship is now gone, in the past. Yet, unlike a death, this transformation is not something that ordinarily elicits profound grief—just occasional moments of sadness and nostalgia.

What, then, is lost when we grieve? Grief over a death, like grief over involuntary childlessness, is not principally about the subtraction of a concrete entity from one's world. Comprehension of what has happened is inextricable from the recognition, over time, of lost possibilities: "I feel I've been robbed of my future" (#55); "I am grieving for the loss of my future, of my whole life" (#83); "there's a constant feeling of being cheated out of your future" (#47). It is not that one first acknowledges a loss of possibilities and then grieves. Rather, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3, it is through a grief process that we recognize and negotiate loss. Phenomenologically speaking, at least, the object of grief does not precede the experience of grief; it is entwined with it. Grief changes over time because an engagement with possibilities is dynamic, as is one's relationship with the deceased.

This is not to imply that grief is directed exclusively toward the future as opposed to the past. Grief over the death of a person is not simply past- or future-oriented; the two are inseparable. How we remember our past, the significance that past events have for us, and how those events relate to one another depend in part on where we are heading—on whether commitments, values, projects, and pastimes are retained, revised, or lost. We can feel more or less connected to aspects of our past, and its meanings are altered in light of unfolding events. In this way, Sartre (1943/1989, 497–499) suggests that we can and do change our past, by continuing to actualize meaningful possibilities that transform its significance:

> The past as "that which is to be changed" is indispensable to the choice of the future and . . . consequently no free surpassing can be effected except in terms of a past, but we can see too how the very *nature* of the past comes to the past from the original choice of a future. . . . All my past is there pressing, urgent, imperious, but its meanings and the orders which it gives me I choose by the very project of my end. . . . It is the future which decides whether the past is living or dead.

The point applies more specifically to grief. For instance, Peter Goldie remarks on the parallels between how we relate to our past during grief and free indirect style in literature, where the perspectives of narrator and character are entangled. Memories involving the deceased are altered by the death, insofar as they are recontextualized in light of our current situation:

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> In grieving, we relate to our past in a special way, realizing that things as they used to be, and as we remember them, can never be the same again. Our position is, in just this sense, agonizingly ironic, and our thinking about and remembering our past, from the perspective that we now have on it, can reflect this irony through the psychological correlate of free indirect style. (Goldie 2012, 56)

What transforms these memories is not just the fact of the death but also the loss of certain future possibilities involving the deceased. There is a contrast between what the future now offers and the kinds of possibilities attached to events-as-remembered, resulting in tensions and conflicts that are negotiated over time.

An emphasis on lost possibilities can accommodate the self-directed, other-directed, and relational aspects of grief and loss. We can distinguish the following broad categories: my possibilities; your possibilities; our possibilities. In the context of an interpersonal relationship, one is not just concerned with furthering one's own projects and utilizing the other person in order to actualize relevant possibilities. One also cares about the actualization of *her* possibilities and acts in ways that are intelligible only relative to that end.[19] Sometimes the distinction between what is mine and what is yours does not apply; possibilities are instead experienced as *ours*. The three are phenomenologically inextricable, both before and after a bereavement. When Person B thinks of Person A and concerns herself with A's well-being, B does not first of all detach herself from any relationship with A, so as to look upon A from a detached standpoint of selfless concern. As we saw in chapter 3, B encounters A against the backdrop of a shared world that itself presupposes their relationship. Hence, B does not have a wholly independent sense of *who* A is. Instead, B's practical identity is partly constituted by the relationship with A and vice versa. Concern over the same unitary loss of life possibilities can therefore be directed more specifically at B's current predicament, at what has happened to A, or at the relationship between A and B:

> I am grieving not only him, but the loss of our life together, past, and future. (#17)

> Losing my husband meant losing the future I thought I had, the everyday routine that we had, the security I felt and the deep love that we shared. (#41)

> The future had looked as though it was all falling into place and we were so excited to be sharing it. (#47)

> In that instant I lost the love of my life and the whole of my future. (#54)

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Thus, in conceiving of grief as an engagement with lost possibilities, I have in mind something that is phenomenologically unitary, encompassing a "me," a "you," and an "us." For current purposes, we can be agnostic about the metaphysical status of the "us." The point is simply that some of the relevant possibilities are encountered in the first instance as "ours," rather than as mine and also yours; the subject that one initially assumes when experiencing and contemplating them is plural. Although it is also right to say that grief is about the loss of a relationship, the death of a person, or a person's being dead, these are not incompatible objects of grief. Instead, they are different aspects of a unitary disturbance of possibilities.

One might object that a loss of possibilities is merely the *formal* object of grief. Hence, the issue of its concrete object remains unresolved—is it the death, the person's being dead, the loss of a relationship, or something else? The formal object of an emotion is generally conceived of as an evaluative property attributed to its concrete object, which renders an emotion of that *type* situationally appropriate.[20] For example, while the concrete object of a particular experience of fear may be a hungry tiger, the formal object of that type of emotion is threat. Similarly, we might say that the concrete object of grief is a death or the loss of a relationship, whereas the formal object is loss. However, it is misleading to think of grief in these terms, as a singular emotional experience with a formal object and a concrete object. If the formal object of grief is a loss of possibilities, then it is not something that we "take in" fully at any particular time. Instead, it is something that we experience, comprehend, and navigate over a prolonged period. Our emotional experience at a given point during the process is concerned with one or another aspect of this loss. Depending on which aspect, the experience might be said to be directed at the death, the person's being dead, the circumstances of the death, loss of a relationship, the implications for one's future, how one will cope, and so forth. Hence, the temporally extended process of experiencing and engaging with a loss of possibilities has different concrete objects at different times. Furthermore, objects of experience have varying degrees of concreteness and specificity. For instance, having thought "we will never sit at our favorite table in that restaurant on a Friday evening again," one might then be struck by a more diffuse sense of a future that is lacking in significant ways. So, the *phenomenology* of grief does not conform to a straightforward distinction between concrete and formal objects. The difference between the two is a matter of degree. In

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addition, the formal object is experienced, understood, and engaged with over a prolonged period. Given this, the distinction needs to be reconceived as involving a part–whole relation; constituent experiences are directed at more localized aspects of a larger sense of loss.

Grief thus has a range of variably concrete objects, which qualify as objects of grief insofar as they are integral to a larger loss of possibilities. An experience of loss is not directed at a death per se but a death as a loss of possibilities for you, for me, and for us. There may well be good (non-phenomenological) reasons for retaining a clear-cut distinction between the concrete and formal objects of emotion processes, such as identifying and distinguishing types of processes by appealing to their formal objects. However, in considering what the *experience* of grief is directed at, the relationship proves to be more complicated. Grief is not an emotional experience with a singular, concrete object but an extended engagement with a wide-ranging loss of possibilities. So, what might at first appear to be directed primarily at something in the past turns out to be future-oriented. Nevertheless, it remains inseparable from how we relate to our past, from how the past matters to us in light of where we are heading.

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7 Interpersonal Emotion Regulation

This chapter builds on the conclusions of chapters 5 and 6, by turning to the nature and role of emotion regulation in grief. Although emotion regulation has become a well-established field of research in recent years, it has received little attention from philosophers. However, if we are to understand the temporal structure of emotion processes such as grief, it is important to consider how they are shaped and regulated over time. To do so, I begin by distinguishing some different conceptions of emotion regulation, after which I focus specifically on the interpersonal and social dimensions of regulation. Given the extent to which human emotion regulation is reliant on relations and interactions with particular individuals and the wider social world, I suggest that grief poses a distinctive regulatory challenge. As we have seen, grief can involve the prolonged disturbance of an experiential world that more usually lends structure to emotional experience. Furthermore, it often involves losing the very person to whom one would otherwise have turned for guidance and support. So, there is both emotion dysregulation and a reduced ability to negotiate that dysregulation. Even so, relations with other people can continue to support emotion regulation in a number of ways, as can continuing bonds with the deceased. Hence, the course of grief over time is not dictated solely by internal psychological processes, but—to a significant extent—by processes that are interpersonally and socially structured. There is also considerable variation in the types of regulatory resources available to people and the ways in which they are used. To illustrate the important roles of interpersonal relations and interactions in shaping and regulating experiences of grief, the chapter concludes by reflecting on first-person accounts of grief during the COVID-19 pandemic. These indicate several ways in which privation of interpersonal and social interaction can influence the course of grief over time.

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7.1 Regulating Emotions

How we respond emotionally to situations and events depends on our values, commitments, projects, pastimes, and habitual expectations, relative to which things matter to us in the ways they do. Hence, disturbances of life structure can involve widespread disruption of emotional experience. In the absence of cohesive, dynamic patterns of significant possibilities, emotions are no longer elicited in organized ways. Furthermore, it is unclear what we *ought to* feel in response to events, as the context in which those events matter is itself in flux. During grief, our various emotions, including those integral to grief, are therefore susceptible to disruption. However, as discussed in chapter 2, grief is also the process whereby we navigate that disturbance. So, it involves a response to dysregulation that is itself susceptible to dysregulation.

Emotion regulation can be conceived of in different ways.[1] According to James Gross, whose pioneering work helped to establish emotion regulation as a substantial research field, it encompasses a diversity of processes and strategies that influence which emotions are experienced, the intensity with which they are experienced, when they occur, how long they last, which other emotions they lead to, and how they are expressed. He distinguishes between the regulation of something *by* an emotion and the regulation *of* an emotion, restricting his use of the term "emotion regulation" to the latter (e.g., Gross 1999, 2001). Nevertheless, this also involves indirectly regulating other aspects of our lives, insofar as the relevant emotions influence wider experiences, thoughts, and activities. It can also involve regulation of one emotion by another emotion.

For Gross, emotion regulation includes both conscious and nonconscious strategies. He draws a broad distinction between "*antecedent-focused* and *response-focused* emotion-regulation strategies" (e.g., Gross 2001, 215). The former are implemented before an emotional response is fully formed, whereas the latter involve manipulating the effects of emotions that are already under way. However, this distinction is not clear-cut, as there is no nonarbitrary moment at which an emotion might be said to be fully formed rather than still in development. This is especially apparent when considering emotions that take the form of multifaceted, temporally extended processes.

Gross also identifies a number of more specific strategies for manipulating emotions: selecting or modifying one's situation; directing and redirecting

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attention; cognitive change (such as reevaluation); and modulating one's response to a situation. He regards reevaluation of one's situation, in particular, as a "powerful means of emotion regulation" (Gross 1999, 560). Emotion regulation is not simply a matter of seeking to elicit or enhance emotional experiences that are pleasant, while avoiding unpleasant emotions altogether or attempting to reduce their unpleasantness. There are, as Gross (2014, 13) observes, "trade-offs" between competing motives such as pleasure and practical gain. For instance, one might be motivated to carry on working in order to achieve a long-term goal, despite a strong hedonic preference for going to the pub.

Emotion regulation involves varying degrees of awareness, insight, and agency. It could be conceived of more specifically as the explicitly motivated "pursuit of desired emotional states" (Tamir 2016, 199). However, like Gross (1999, 2001), I will adopt a more permissive conception that includes both conscious and nonconscious regulatory processes. Although I am concerned with the phenomenology of emotion, rather than nonconscious processes, the trajectory of an emotional experience can depend in part on regulatory processes that involve little or no first-person awareness or insight. There will also be cases where we take ourselves to be doing *p* when we are actually doing *q*. Furthermore, emotion regulation involves a range of experiences that are not, first and foremost, experiences *of* emotion regulation. As we will see, interpersonal interactions of various kinds have important regulatory roles to play. In particular, they contribute to the temporal structure of grief.

We could think of emotion regulation as something that occurs only on occasion (e.g., in challenging circumstances or when an emotional response has gone awry) or, alternatively, as a ubiquitous feature of emotional life. Kappas (2011) notes insightfully that, in mundane situations, emotional responses to situations "auto-regulate" by adjusting in ways that track our changing relationships with eliciting stimuli. So, there is no distinction to be drawn between processes that constitute and regulate emotion. For example, a fast-approaching car no longer elicits fear once that emotion has led to situational change; one steps out of the way and the significance of surrounding events shifts to reflect this, as do one's emotions. More generally, emotional responses do not "stay on" until a "dedicated emotion regulation system" steps in to switch them off (Kappas 2011, 20). This is consistent with my suggestion that the experiential world within which

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emotional episodes occur provides much or all of the required regulatory structure; emotions wax and wane with changing patterns of significance that reflect our projects and values. However, the regulatory challenges posed during grief are quite different. They include negotiating, over a prolonged period of time, a pronounced and pervasive disturbance of one's world. It is thus important to distinguish between (a) ubiquitous regulation enabled by life structure and (b) regulation of a kind that is required when life structure is substantially disrupted. The two scenarios are not exhaustive. For instance, there are also circumstances where emotions themselves prove disruptive—they may be overly intense, insufficiently intense, or situationally inappropriate. This need not stem from disruption of the context within which they operate. Indeed, it can be unruly emotions that disrupt their established contexts. However, where grief is concerned, the contrast between (a) and (b) is of particular interest.

To refer simply to *regulating grief* would be simplistic. As we have seen, there is no single, simple emotional response called "grief," which might be manipulated in however many ways. The regulation of a temporally extended emotion process that engages with matters of importance is very different from the regulation of a fleeting emotional response to events that are of little or no long-term concern. Regulating grief involves regulating numerous different emotional responses that occur over a prolonged period. So, a type of regulatory process or even a single instance of regulation may influence a variety of constituent emotions, rather than acting upon one brief emotional episode. The distinction between regulation *of* and *by* emotion is thus difficult to maintain in this case. Grief is not an episode; it is a process that involves emotions influencing thoughts and activities, which then influence other emotions, where all may participate in the process of comprehending and engaging with a loss of life possibilities.

One might object that talk of emotion regulation is therefore inappropriate here. Grief is not a target of emotion regulation at all, given that the term "emotion regulation" instead relates to much shorter-term emotional episodes. For instance, Gross (2014, 8) distinguishes emotion regulation from the longer-term challenge of "coping" with bereavement. However, restricting the scope of emotion regulation in this way would risk excluding those emotions that have the most profound impact on our lives. Moreover, it would prevent us from acknowledging an important *type* of regulatory achievement. The task of regulating grief differs in kind from that of

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regulating mundane episodic emotions, such as being afraid of the dog or angry about missing the bus. One reason for this is that regulating emotion in the context of an intact life structure differs from doing so when that structure is lacking. But grief is also distinctive in another way; it can involve losing a person to whom one would ordinarily turn for support in difficult circumstances. So, by limiting the scope of emotion regulation to short-term episodes, we lose sight of a distinctive challenge: restoring regulatory structure (in the form of a stable experiential world), without the support of that structure or access to certain interpersonal processes that compensate for its absence.

7.2 People as Regulators

Emotion regulation could be construed as something that we accomplish ourselves with varying degrees of awareness and insight. However, as Gross (e.g., 2014, 6) observes, there is a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic emotion regulation, where the former involves shaping one's own emotions, while the latter involves shaping someone else's emotions. A further distinction can be drawn between interacting with someone in order to alter their emotions and doing so in order to alter one's own emotions, where one of these is sometimes achieved via the other. My focus here is on how we relate to others in ways that regulate our own emotions, wider experiences, patterns of thought, and activities, in circumstances where we are deprived of relationships and life structure that might otherwise have enabled us to do so. This need not amount to *using* other people in a self-centered way, so as to achieve some desired goal. We often regulate our emotions in order to take others into account, as when acting out of concern for them or negotiating competing goals.

Gross's work is occupied mostly with intrinsic emotion regulation. However, others have identified a range of contributions made by interpersonal and social processes. In fact, it is questionable whether a distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic regulation is sustainable in the human case. Rather, one might suggest, the two are "necessarily entwined in the generation of affect" (Campos et al. 2011, 27). Some studies of interpersonal emotion regulation are concerned specifically with deliberate manipulation of one party by another (e.g., Reeck, Ames, and Ochsner 2016). However, I will continue to adopt a broader conception, according to which we regulate others and are

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regulated by them without always being aware of acting or being acted upon in the relevant ways. In addressing the interpersonal and social dimensions of emotion regulation, we could focus on fleeting interactions with other people, routine interactions that follow shared norms, repeated patterns of interactions with specific individuals (friends or family members), or interactions with wider social environments (such as going to a cinema or café). Here, I am concerned principally with how particular people, including the deceased, are implicated in emotion regulation during grief. This spans a range of processes that influence the kinds of emotions we feel, their intensity, when we experience them, how long they last, what their effects are, and how they are interpreted by ourselves and others. The case of grief, I will suggest, illustrates both the extent to which habitual patterns of emotion regulation depend on relations with others and how we turn to others when those patterns are disrupted.

Interpersonal emotion regulation is especially evident in early attachment, where it is well documented that the emotional behavior of a caregiver ordinarily elicits emotions from an infant in patterned ways and vice versa (e.g., Hobson 2002). It has been further suggested that regulation of emotion via structured interactions with specific individuals is not limited to childhood but continues throughout the human life span: "Social partners continue to serve as external emotion 'regulators' over the life course, through diverse mechanisms" (Diamond and Aspinwall 2003, 145).[2] For instance, romantic love has been conceptualized as an attachment process comparable to infant attachment, where a number of different attachment styles can similarly be discerned (Hazan and Shaver 1987). Such attachments include intricate patterns of coregulation, thus rendering people vulnerable to dysregulation in the event of relationship loss (Hofer 1984, 1994; Sbarra and Hazan 2008; Mikulincer, Shaver, and Pereg 2003; Shaver and Mikulincer 2014).

Interpersonal processes can contribute to the type of emotion we experience on a given occasion, the content of that emotion, and even whether we are able to experience an emotion of that type at all.[3] Regulation might involve a token emotional response being manipulated by one-off interaction with another person. Alternatively, a particular person might act in consistent, reliable ways in a certain kind of situation or range of situations. In the case of a close relationship with a partner or other family member with whom one lives, there is likely to be an intricate web of variably shared

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regulatory processes. Family units also provide enduring structure for emotion regulation (Thompson 2014). How another person or group of people acts upon one's emotions will reflect not just the types of relationships in question (e.g., parent, child, spouse, friend) but also the "perceived *quality*" of potential regulators (Coan and Maresh 2014, 223).

Interactions with other people not only serve to *regulate*; they are themselves *regulated* by shared expectations, which reflect wider norms, familiar types of situations, and established relationships. Thus, in mundane circumstances, many interpersonal interactions *take care of themselves*, just as emotions do. The experiential world, the emotions that it elicits, and one's interactions with others interrelate in ways that are familiar, cohesive, and fairly stable over time. Kappas (2011, 20) thus refers to "social autoregulation." However, we also turn to others for support during times of upheaval, when life structure is lacking.[4] To appreciate the potential scale of emotion dysregulation during grief and the consequent need for external support, it is important to acknowledge the full extent of our everyday reliance on external regulators, along with the ways in which bereavement can impede the ability to draw on them.

The unfolding of an emotional experience often depends directly on our interaction with another person; our emotions influence theirs and vice versa. Thus, as Griffiths and Scarantino (2009, 446) observe, there is a "dynamic process of negotiation mediated by reciprocal feedback between emoter and interactants." However, even when we are not interacting with others in this way, emotion regulation processes continue to depend on habitual expectations concerning the behavior of specific individuals and other people in general. Colombetti and Krueger (2015) develop a wider-ranging account of our reliance on environmental "scaffolding" for emotion regulation. This scaffolding consists in a diverse assortment of entities, places, and activities, all of which we rely upon in order to alter our emotions in predictable ways.[5] Many forms of scaffolding do not involve other people but instead the likes of wearing certain clothes, reading and writing letters, listening to music, and visiting places such as art galleries, cinemas, churches, and cafés. Furthermore, many regulatory activities will be solitary in nature. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the effectiveness of an impersonal regulator will often depend on expectations concerning other people. Sometimes, those expectations concern particular individuals, groups, or types of people (e.g., partners, friends, families, teachers, technicians, waiters, musicians, drivers, advisors),

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and sometimes they involve other people in general (that is, anyone you might encounter or anticipate encountering during the course of daily life). For example, relaxing bicycle rides would not be possible if you constantly doubted the competence or intentions of all drivers in the vicinity; you would not feel at ease in a favorite set of clothes if you expected everyone to laugh at you for wearing them; you could not become pleasantly immersed in a film if you experienced the rest of the cinema audience as threatening. Even the regulatory effects of drinking a cup of coffee may depend on sitting in a café where there are other people. In fact, almost everything we anticipate from the surrounding environment depends in some way on what we anticipate from others. By implication, so does our use of environmental resources as regulators.

In chapter 2, I discussed how the significance of the surrounding environment can come to depend, to a large extent, on one's relationship with a particular person. With this, so does the ability to engage with numerous other regulators: the significance of this song relates to us; going out for a meal together is something we do in order to relax; the place where I walk in the evenings is imbued with happy memories of what we have done together; this is our favorite café. Other interpersonal relationships can also depend on the deceased: they are our friends; we are meeting up with the other parents. Some of these relationships may play important regulatory roles and also enable access to further regulatory resources, such as shared pastimes. Loss of an interpersonal regulator can thus impact upon the availability of other regulators.[6] Families become closer or fall apart; some friendships are lost while others are established; and people's behavior changes over time:

> I have severed relationships with some family members and friends. Other relationships have been strengthened. Some of those closest to me let me down, some relative strangers became good friends. (#31)

> I found most people, if not everyone, very supportive in the beginning, which was fantastic, but slowly I realised who was in for the long haul. (#54)

How people respond to upheaval will vary considerably, depending on factors such as age, gender, culture, education, upbringing, health, and other personal circumstances.[7] Nevertheless, most people turn to others for one or another form of support. What distinguishes bereavement is that it often involves losing an important regulator, sometimes the very person

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to whom one would otherwise have turned in order to comprehend and navigate upheaval. Suppose one's experiential world is disrupted to such an extent that it no longer indicates a route for one's emotions to follow, as might be the case following loss of a job, a life-changing accident, or the onset of chronic illness. In chapter 4, we saw how such phenomenological disturbances can involve a pervasive lack of direction; it is no longer clear what one ought to do next or even what the salient options are. Nevertheless, in situations where we lack a sense of how to proceed and where decisions are still needed, there is the option of delegating parts of the decision-making process to others.[8] We also draw on relationships in ways that sustain certain aspects of our lives and enable the development of new structure.

Where the loss of a person is at the same time the loss of a resource for coping with loss, it is *doubly disorienting*. One is not only lost in the middle of a forest without any visible paths to follow; one is lost in the absence of a potential guide. For instance, in the case of a close relationship with a partner, one may be faced with losing (a) projects and pastimes that were central to one's life, (b) access to a distinctive personal *style* that shaped one's world in an ongoing way, (c) scaffolding for interpreting and engaging with emotionally challenging events, (d) various other kinds of practical support, and (e) access to any other regulative resources that depend on (a), (b), (c), or (d):

> You lose everything when your husband dies. You lose your best friend, your lover, your confidante, your guiding hand, your listening ear, your present, your future, your way of living, your financial standard of living, you become mum and dad to your kids, you lose companionship, you lose shared history, you lose someone to help with chores, you lose someone to fix things or do the DIY or car maintenance, you lose joy, you lose hope, you lose a purpose to your life. (#87)

How we relate to other people thus has an important role to play in shaping the trajectory of a grief process.[9] Another important consideration is whether there is a continuing bond with the deceased and, if so, what form it takes. I have suggested that the distinctive *style* of a particular person can continue to be experienced even after that person's death. This can serve to shape one's experiences of significance, sustaining a sense that the world has new possibilities to offer.[10] Continuing bonds are also relevant to emotion regulation in other ways. For instance, which possessions one retains, what one does with them, and the significance they have in

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light of a continuing relationship can affect the ability to regulate emotion by experiencing and interacting with objects. In addition, by influencing how we relate to the world as a whole, continuing bonds contribute to the availability or unavailability of wider regulatory resources. For instance, the emotional effects of a walk through *our* favorite park will vary considerably, depending on whether it fosters a sense of ongoing connection or serves only as a painful reminder of loss.

However, grief also involves experiences of turning to the deceased and not finding them. Some of these experiences can be construed in terms of habitually seeking a person who would otherwise have provided regulatory support. In earlier chapters, I suggested that what Parkes (1998, 47) describes in terms of a "strong impulse to search" is often better thought of in terms of habitual expectations that have yet to be revised. It can be added that searching behaviors sometimes take the more specific form of habitually seeking a source of support. One believes the person to be dead and experiences an associated disturbance of life structure. But what remains integral to one's world, at least sometimes or in certain situations, is the prospect of turning to that person for support. Didion (2006, 44) refers to something like this as "magical thinking," where explicit acknowledgment of the death runs alongside the implicit project of "bringing him back" via some kind of "magic trick."

The capacity for emotion regulation further depends on one's various relations with the living. For instance, sustenance and revision of life structure both rely on expectations concerning the motivations, capabilities, and likely actions of others—specific individuals and others in general. Almost every project and situation we engage in depends in some way on what we anticipate from others. Indeed, we could not have a meaningfully structured, temporally enduring experiential world at all without having certain general expectations involving other people: they won't try to mow us down as we cross the road; they won't give us false information when we ask for directions; they won't hurt us for no reason as we pass by them on the street. So, the extent to which bereavement disrupts one's world will depend, in part, on whether or not relations with other people are compromised too—whether and how social activities, friendships, and bonds with family members are sustained, lost, strengthened, or otherwise altered. Activities that are relatively untouched by a bereavement also play an important role in sustaining life structure. For example, Oates (2011, 172–174) describes

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how, during the semester after her husband's death, her students became a "lifeline," providing "two lively and absorbing hours" of respite from the "chaos" of grief.

Perhaps the most profound form of dysregulation consists in a pervasive loss of what we might call trust or confidence in other people; one loses a principal regulator and is then confronted with a world where it seems that nobody can be relied upon for anything. For the most part, what we anticipate from other people involves a nonlocalized, unreflective set of expectations concerning how interactions are likely to proceed: they will not cause me harm; they will help me when I am in need (Ratcliffe 2017). Granted, we do not anticipate all people in this way at all times. Nevertheless, distrust is ordinarily the exception rather than the norm. It is a localized experience that stands out as anomalous relative to a more generally confident or trusting engagement with the social world. However, consider what world experience would be like if this overarching style of anticipation were eroded or even wholly absent, if others offered no prospect of the kinds of relations that might aid in sustaining or repairing one's world. All projects, commitments, and values would be transient, fragile, or unsustainable. In place of a stable world, there would be a pervasive indeterminacy of the kind described in chapter 4, involving a lack of guiding structure. Furthermore, there would be no prospect of relief from this. (I will return to such experiences in chapter 8, when I consider the nature of pathological grief.) This is to be contrasted with all those cases where an experiential world continues to be shaped and regulated by relations with others. Here, lack of structure is offset by another form of indeterminacy, identified in chapter 5, which points to the prospect of new possibilities.

In summary, then, bereavement can pose a distinctive regulatory challenge, the nature of which renders the course of grief both fragile and inseparable from interpersonal and social relations. It is important to distinguish (1) emotions that are regulated by life structure, (2) emotions that involve responding to disturbances of life structure, and (3) emotions, such as grief, which can further involve a loss of access to regulatory processes that one would otherwise have drawn upon. The nature of emotion regulation in grief is qualitatively different from the tasks of eliciting, sustaining, modifying, or suppressing episodic emotions that occur during the course of daily life. This regulatory challenge is associated specifically with personal loss, although it is not exclusive to bereavement. For instance, the breakup of a long-term

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relationship could similarly involve disruption of an experiential world, loss of a principal regulator, and being unable to seek support from others.

7.3 Narrative

One important resource for shaping, interpreting, and regulating emotion during grief is narrative. People sometimes remark on how being able to articulate or write about what has happened can play an important role in comprehending the death and its implications: "I wrote, to begin with, because there was no other option, no other way of making sense of an overwhelming feeling of disbelief about what was happening" (Rosenfeld 2020, 8). Both the narratives that one constructs and the act of narration itself have potential roles to play in regulating the course of grief. One such role is the provision of a coherent framework for interpreting what has happened and guiding one's responses to it. In her memoir of bereavement, Anne Roiphe writes,

> Writing this book provides a floor under my experience. Having used writing to hold myself erect all my adult life, I am bold enough to believe that I cannot fall because of this word scaffolding that, all invisible, props up my days. (Roiphe 2008, 21)

How grief is shaped and regulated by narrative will vary from one person and one narrative to the next. In Roiphe's case, it could be that the act of writing itself comprises a project relative to which her activities have continuing coherence and meaning. In addition, the content of the narrative may provide much-needed structure. An explicit, narrative scaffolding can serve as a partial and temporary substitute for an experiential world that is lacking in coherence. The emphasis of the narrative will vary. It might be concerned principally with what has happened, one's relations with others, or what one now faces. It might provide a means of interpreting events and emotions, a rationale for one's current activities, or a way of facilitating interactions with other people.

Where the ability to assemble a certain narrative on one's own is lacking, the prospect of doing so with others may remain. According to Walter (1996), one important role played by narratives is that of establishing an enduring, shared biography of the deceased. This, he suggests, "enables the living to integrate the memory of the dead into their ongoing lives," something that is ordinarily achieved collaboratively, through conversations

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with others who knew and cared about the person. The result is a coherent story of that person, their death, and their value to others, an achievement that influences the path of grief and also the kind of connection that one retains with the deceased (Walter 1996, 7). Consistent with this, it has been reported that those who are able to construct coherent narratives of loss are generally better able to integrate loss into their lives (e.g., Neimeyer, Baldwin, and Gillies 2006; Sbarra and Hazan 2008.[11]

Walter (1996, 13) emphasizes the importance of establishing an "accurate picture of the deceased." However, this can be contrasted with a role that the *process* of narration sometimes plays. The latter is not a matter of accuracy and completeness but of dynamism and open-endedness. As discussed in chapter 5, sustaining a sense of the distinctiveness and otherness of the deceased involves experiencing any fixed image, any set of memories, any story, as incomplete. To retain a sense of that person's style is to be open to new possibilities involving them, new ways of being affected by them. Interactions with others can involve sharing different perspectives and different stories, together invoking a sense of spontaneity and novelty that enriches participants' sense of *that person*. Higgins (2013) suggests that such interactions can also assist in reorganizing one's life, not by establishing a new, fixed narrative to replace one that has become unsustainable but by cultivating something that is ongoing and open-ended.

One might object that this emphasis on interpersonal emotion regulation and, more specifically, narrative construction overstates our dependence on others. For instance, one could appeal to various criticisms of the widespread view that explicit "grief work," of a kind that involves reflecting on one's emotions with others, is required in order to come to terms with loss (Stroebe and Schut 1999; Stroebe, Schut, and Stroebe 2005). However, the target of such criticisms is more specific than what I have in mind here. Sharing and co-constructing narratives about the deceased does not have to involve explicitly *working through* something, a point that applies equally to numerous other forms of interaction that influence the course of grief. Furthermore, narrative construction need not be preoccupied with the fact of loss or its integration into one's life. Talking about a person for whom one continues to care can be interpreted by all parties concerned as just that. An emphasis on the importance of interpersonal emotion regulation is therefore compatible with a lack of effortful, explicitly directed grief work. It is one thing to question the need for grief work. But it would be

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something else entirely to maintain that interpersonal relations are of little consequence to the course of grief.

Sometimes, when sharing experiences and stories, comforting one another, or participating in other bereavement-related activities together, it might seem more natural to say that *we* are grieving than that *I* am grieving and, independently of that, *you* are grieving too. In light of this, Krueger (2016) considers whether a token emotional experience can be shared between two or more people, such that there is—at a given time—only a single, shared experience of grief, rather than two separate experiences of grief that influence one another. He suggests that certain cases of coregulation might be understood in this way, given that the dynamic unfolding of both parties' emotions depends upon a single, shared, regulatory structure.

However, there is no straightforward relationship between the degree to which emotion regulation in grief is integrated and the experience of being a "we." Experiences of interpersonal emotion regulation equally involve encountering one another as *you*. This is sometimes accompanied by a sense that *we are grieving*, but not always. After all, engaging with loss often involves relating in similarly intricate ways to others who are not grieving. Thus, even though both parties' emotions participate in a common, dynamic structure, it can remain the case that only one of them undergoes a certain type of emotion process. Nevertheless, there are at least three ways in which a given experience of grief might be said to be "shared." First of all, two or more people's grief can have a common object. This is of little interest, as it amounts only to there being two or more token emotions of the same type, elicited by and directed at the same situation. A second way in which grief can be shared is when the object of emotion impacts upon a shared life structure, upon possibilities that are *ours*. This still does not amount to an experience of grief that is itself distributed between two or more parties—I grieve over our lost possibilities and so do you. But a third option comes closer to what Krueger identifies: two or more people's experiences of grief are shaped over time by a single, interpersonally distributed regulatory structure. When this is combined with a common object and a shared life structure, it seems right to say that *we* grieve over *our* loss, rather than that I grieve over a death and you also happen to grieve over the same death. Even so, this does not add up to a single, token experience of grief that is somehow shared between two individuals. Neither does it warrant the claim that there is only one grief process, considered over its entire

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course. Even when those who grieve have a close relationship, grief processes will interact in different ways and to varying degrees over time. What could be maintained is that, for a time at least, two grief processes fuse together. Where a single individual is concerned, grief consists in a unified, temporally extended process, despite gaps during periods of unconsciousness. It does so because the process as a whole comprises a cohesive engagement with a loss of life possibilities. Perhaps engaging with the loss of *our possibilities* can be cohesive in a comparable way. Thus, although I have one emotional experience, while you have another, they can be regarded as integral to a singular emotional process without there being a singular, unbroken phenomenology.

However, there is a risk here of obscuring the nuances of interpersonal experience in grief. Even while experiencing *our* grief, I may continue to address *you* as a distinct individual, recognize your experience as distinct from mine, and be affected by it in virtue of its distinctness. So, even with considerable integration of regulation, there remains an interplay between commonality and difference. Where "our" world is affected and "we" engage with loss together, the two parties coregulate by retaining perspectives that continue to differ from each other, sometimes clashing.[12] As illustrated by the co-construction of narrative, sharing one's grief with others involves their being able to open up new and unforeseen possibilities. They harbor the potential to play certain regulatory roles precisely because they are distinct from oneself and continue to be experienced as such. Furthermore, increasing the intricacy and duration of interactions between a *you* and an *I* need not involve gradually dissolving the phenomenological boundaries between them. Rather, there remains a sense of the other person's ability to open up possibilities in ways that one cannot. Hence, although it is plausible to maintain that two or more parties can share a single regulatory structure, the intricacy of emotion regulation and shared experience in grief cannot be captured in terms of a single, token emotional experience shared by two or more subjects.[13]

In addition to recognizing how particular people regulate our emotions, it is important to acknowledge how these interactions are shaped by their wider social and cultural settings. A co-constructed narrative concerning the deceased can be ephemeral, assembled through spontaneous conversation between people and never repeated. Alternatively, it might endure for a longer period, during which it is told, retold, revised, elaborated, and

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disseminated to others. In both these cases, the narrative concerns a familiar person and their place in our lives. However, other narratives consist of generic or canonical accounts of grief, which are already established within a culture as interpretive resources or guides. This applies to the seemingly conflicting narratives of severing ties and continuing bonds, discussed in chapter 6. Such narratives, and the wider frameworks of rituals, practices, and norms to which they belong, further contribute to emotion regulation, by providing shared interpretive frameworks, facilitating or interfering with interpersonal interactions, and describing or prescribing ways of acting.[14]

For example, in an interesting book, *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain*, Geoffrey Gorer (1965) documents a variety of mourning practices and norms established in Britain at the time he was writing, along with certain changes that had occurred. His discussion emphasizes how cultural norms associated with grief had shifted and diversified, coming to place more weight on the preferences of the individual. Practices affected by this included funerals and other rituals, dress codes, and periods of abstinence from social activities. As a result of these changes, Gorer suggests, grief had become "unpatterned" (64). Although not in these terms, he indicates that people's emotion processes at the time had been dysregulated by the erosion of established, normative, sociocultural scaffolding and a move toward individual choice. Gorer distinguishes between various trajectories that grief might follow, which depend in part on sociocultural structures that regulate its unfolding. Being able to "weep freely," he claims, is a "reliable sign that mourning is being worked through and overcome" (77). In contrast to grief processes that involve movement and change, there is what he calls "mummification," where one "preserves the grief for the lost husband or wife by keeping the house and every object in it precisely as he or she had left it, as though it were a shrine which would at any moment be reanimated" (79). Gorer connects the inability to "get over grief" with "the absence of any ritual either individual or social, lay or religious," to guide the bereaved and those they interact with (83).[15]

Whatever we might say about the specifics of Gorer's account, he is right to observe that interpersonal, social, and cultural processes are integral to the *dynamism* of grief, something that is essential to the recognition and negotiation of loss. As we saw in chapter 3, a ubiquitous theme in first-person accounts of grief is that of feeling, at least for a time, cut off from social life. A world of shared norms and practices endures. However, a more

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specific life structure, which gave meaning and value to one's own activities and enabled one to engage with that world, has been lost. Gone is an organized future, filled with possibilities for meaningful self-development, a future in which others continue to participate: "I don't know where I fit in anymore" (#45); "I have no future" (#87); "I feel I never will be able to move on" (#94). One of the most important ways in which interpersonal and social interactions shape and regulate the course of grief is by contributing to the integration of loss into one's life structure, in a manner that renews the sense of participation in a shared world. As I will now show, the nature and extent of this contribution becomes more apparent when we reflect on situations that prevent such interactions from occurring.

7.4 Grief and the Pandemic

I will conclude this chapter by reflecting on how social restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic affected people's experiences of grief. To do so, I will draw on first-person testimonies obtained via two qualitative surveys, one of which was introduced in chapter 1. The other survey, conducted during spring and summer 2020, set out to investigate the phenomenological effects of social restrictions (e.g., their effects on people's experiences of interpersonal relations, certain emotions, time, and the surrounding world). In those cases where respondents had suffered bereavements during or shortly before the pandemic, this included the impact on their experiences of grief.[16] Responses to both surveys identify several ways in which losses of interpersonal and social opportunities affect grief and its course over time. However, I do not seek to make any generalizations concerning the effects of restrictions. Even in more usual circumstances, experiences of grief are diverse, as are the ways in which the bereaved depend upon others. Furthermore, restrictions will have affected people in many different ways. For instance, some grieved alone, whereas others shared homes with families, partners, or close friends. So, my more modest aim here is to illustrate some of the ways in which grief is regulated by interpersonal and social relations by considering experiences of grief during the pandemic.

A consistent and prominent theme in first-person accounts is not being able to attend a funeral or, at least, a *proper* funeral and how this interfered with grief. For some, there is a lingering sense of unreality concerning both the funeral and the death: "It feels disconnected and unreal. I guess that it

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is related to the inability to be there and grieve as usual, with other people by my side." As discussed in chapter 3, grief involves a process of "sinking in," whereby the implications of a death are integrated into one's life in the form of altered habits and expectations. Attending a funeral can be an important part of this process. Restrictions also inhibited many other interactions that involve confronting, engaging with, and adapting to loss: "lockdown has made everything a million times worse; it has prevented me from doing all the things that were helping me through my grief" (#178). One respondent, whose mother had died shortly before social restrictions were imposed, mentions being unable to "clear the house out as charity shops are shut" and how the resultant inability to "get a break" from all the associated memories had affected her father. Another recurring theme is being deprived of the opportunity to comfort one another in person and how this makes grief somehow harder:

> I was fortunate to be able to attend but whilst at the funeral social distancing had to be observed. So, even when I was by my family we were unable to console each other by hugging or touching. This lack of being able to console one another definitely made the grieving process harder.

Some accounts emphasize how the loss of social opportunities amounted to a removal of support structures. For one respondent, "coping mechanisms were not there," while others describe feeling "cut off from other people" and from institutions such as churches that would otherwise have provided emotional support. All of this contributes to a pervasive sense of detachment from the shared world:

> I've been in a little bubble and the Covid lockdown has reinforced this and I'm not sure what normal is anymore and how I will ever reach it. . . . Lockdown has been awful. All of our support networks were pulled and it made us feel very alone, which is the worst. (#151)

Disruption of interpersonal and social processes that would otherwise have aided in recognition of and engagement with loss can also lead to an experience of grief that is lacking in dynamism and change. Consider the following passage:

> I said goodbye to my father via technology. We could see each other. We just accepted it. I fear that when and if this situation resolves, I will look back on that time and feel unable to cope with the way the end of my father's life was. I hope that I can recall that it was out of my control at that time and accept that I could not change things. . . . I feel unable to let go of the grief as I feel that I am putting

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> it on hold while we wait for this situation to end and we are all, in a sense, fighting for survival. I feel that this is preventing me from reflecting on what has happened to our family. I feel as though my father's death was part of a world event rather than a private family matter.

Several themes can be discerned here. Grief's being "on hold" is not a matter of its being delayed. Rather, this is a grief that cannot be "let go of." The grief persists, but without changing over time as one comprehends and adjusts to loss. Furthermore, a backdrop of shared upheaval eclipses the particularity of one's own loss and also disrupts attempts to make sense of what has happened, to let its many implications *sink in*. Interestingly, this response also includes concerns about grief's future course. There is an appreciation that the death and the circumstances in which it occurred are yet to be fully acknowledged and that doing so will be emotionally challenging. There is also the *hope* of eventually arriving at a perspective involving acceptance, rather than an alternative perspective involving guilt or regret in relation to events over which one lacked control. This suggests a form of emotion regulation whereby one strives to interpret events in ways that will influence one's future emotional experiences. It is likely that many others who were denied the opportunity to be with loved ones as they died (and often during the weeks and months leading up to the death as well) will face similar challenges. We can thus see how emotion regulation in grief relates closely to the changing significance of memories. One is tasked with integrating one's memories of a person in life, the reality of their death and the circumstances under which it occurred, and one's own orientation toward the future.

Many of those who did not suffer bereavements during the pandemic also experienced a wide-ranging sense of loss concerning life possibilities that were never actualized and will never be recovered:

> I have felt grief because my new baby grandson was born shortly before lockdown and I only saw him twice. He's now nearly 6 months old and I've grieved that I will never be able to get those precious times back that I've missed—the cuddles, the nappy changes, just being able to be there to support his parents and coo over their little one and enjoy him together. So many "firsts" have gone—they are "one and onlys" and can never be experienced again. I love that little one so much and I've missed him so much, it's been like an ache in my heart and has also made me feel angry, frustrated and cheated.

This experience of loss can also extend to possibilities that others have been denied or will be denied due to the unfolding situation: "I grieve for

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the changed world that my children, and others their age, have to deal with; how their prospects have withered with the socioeconomic drought that we are entering." For those who did experience bereavements during this period, we might say there was a *grief within grief*, a loss of possibilities within a loss of possibilities. Although some report that their sense of estrangement from the world was exacerbated by lockdowns and the like, others state that a shared sense of disruption, strangeness, and loss reduced the gulf between their own grief-world and the world of others:

> Lockdown actually helped me not feel so different from everyone else. (#75)

> My husband died a week before lockdown, so I have been struggling with the double weirdness of widowhood and lockdown which made everything much harder. For a while I was in a bubble of grief and didn't really notice the impact of lockdown on others. Then I emerged from that to notice that the world was really horrible for everyone else too. After a while it helped that all the world was strange as I didn't have to deal with life going on as normal all round me while I was suffering so much. (#126)

The distinction between one's own loss of possibilities and this wider experience of loss can also become hard to discern: "the world is different for everyone just now, it's difficult to tell if this is a reaction to grief or the Covid pandemic" (#97). With this, the sense of there being a world to which one might find one's way back is diminished. Consequently, the process of adjusting to the loss might well be impeded, slowed down, delayed, or otherwise altered: "I still think of him as if he were alive because I've been in my little lockdown bubble and haven't had to consider his loss in real terms yet, I think" (#204).

In extreme cases, the regulatory challenge posed by social restrictions takes the following form: (a) an experiential world that previously regulated one's emotions is profoundly disrupted; (b) this disruption involves the loss of a person to whom one would otherwise have turned for support in negotiating disruption; and (c) social support that might have compensated for (a) and (b) is denied. However, it is important to add that people's experiences of grief were affected in *different* ways by social restrictions. In contrast to those who felt deprived of a proper funeral, one respondent expressed relief at not having to attend funerals or engage in other uncomfortable social interactions: "when lockdown came it was a relief, in that I didn't have to pretend I wanted to go out" (#38). Another appreciated

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having time away from the demands of social life, in order to attend to their grief: "lockdown has helped me process my grief" (#215).

Taken together, these different experiences serve to illustrate how grief is shaped by relations with other people, in the context of larger social and cultural environments. Our life structures depend on relationships with specific individuals and, as grief's fragile trajectory makes clear, we also rely on other people when responding to losses of structure. In chapter 8, I will show how this emphasis on the interpersonal and social dimensions of grief can aid us in understanding what distinguishes "typical" from supposedly "pathological" forms of grief.

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8 Trajectories of Grief

I have emphasized how the course of grief is shaped and regulated by processes that are interpersonal and social in nature. This chapter will consider the implications for how we conceive of differences between *typical* and *pathological* forms of grief. I begin by remarking on the diversity of grief and the consequent difficulties that accompany any claims about what is typical or appropriate. Then, I turn to the issue of whether and how typical experiences of grief might be distinguished phenomenologically from clinically significant depression. An important difference, I suggest, is that depression lacks the dynamism, perspective-shifting, and openness to new possibilities that characterize most grief experiences. Associated with this contrast are different ways of experiencing and relating to other people. Whereas depression involves a pervasive sense of estrangement from others, the ability to feel *connected* to others is retained during typical grief, even when one happens to feel isolated from the majority of people.

I go on to discuss forms of grief associated with the labels "complicated," "prolonged," "persistent," "traumatic," and "disenfranchised." What distinguishes pathological from typical grief, I propose, is a lack of dynamic engagement with one's loss of possibilities. This involves being cut off from interpersonal and social processes that contribute to the temporal structure of grief. I identify three broad ways in which grief can depart from a "typical" trajectory: (a) retention of a life structure that is no longer sustainable; (b) inability to replace life structure that has been lost; and (c) adoption of new projects and pastimes without revision of prior structure. I also show how these forms of grief are inextricable from ways of experiencing and relating to the person who has died. Crucial to the course of grief, I suggest, is the extent to which one remains able to *trust* other people. Where

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trust is eroded or absent, so is access to interpersonal and social processes that contribute to comprehension and adjustment. The chapter concludes by considering the notion of "resilience." I observe that even profoundly unsettling grief experiences are compatible with resilience. I also suggest that resilience, too, should be conceived of in terms of current and past interpersonal relations, rather than as an internalized trait.

8.1 The Diversity of Grief

Discussions of pathological grief generally assume that not all grief is pathological and that pathological forms of grief are thus to be distinguished from "typical" grief. But what does typical grief consist of? In seeking to distinguish the two, the first problem we face is that typical grief encompasses considerable diversity. Hence, it is not at all clear that a straightforward distinction can be drawn between two broad types of grief. In the preceding chapters, I described a phenomenological structure common to experiences of grief. That structure includes disturbances of one's experiential world and of one's relations with other people (the living and the dead). The relative prominence of the two factors can vary considerably. Caring deeply for someone does not require substantial integration of that person into one's current projects and pastimes, as with family members who live far away. So, there can be a pronounced sense of personal loss and tensions involving the significance of various memories, without major disruption of current life structure. Conversely, someone might be integrated into one's life despite a relative lack of concern *for* that person, as when they provide regular support of various kinds.

Both aspects of grief encompass further variety. Exactly how one's experiential world is affected by a bereavement will depend on the unique way in which one's projects, pastimes, and habitual expectations are organized and how they involve the deceased. At certain points in my discussion, I have focused more specifically on how an experiential world can come to implicate a long-term partner. Relationships of other kinds often involve similar *degrees* of interdependence, but it is also important to acknowledge qualitative differences. For instance, the world of a young child has a simpler organization than that of a typical adult. The latter is shaped by a more elaborate arrangement of values, projects, and significant possibilities, often stretching many years into the future. In addition, the child's world

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is more fragile than that of most adults. Its sustenance and ongoing development depend on interactions with a small number of caregivers, who mediate a developing sense of who and what to trust and, with this, the ability to negotiate various situations. Early abilities are thus scaffolded by relationships in *ways* that later abilities are generally not. Insofar as a child's world depends on a parent in a distinctive way, it will also be affected in a distinctive way by the parent's death. This also extends to how children understand and respond to what has happened. A young child's world is organized around daily and weekly routines that are managed by caregivers, more so than by long-term projects and plans. It has been suggested that this involves a conception of time that is more "circular" than "linear," impeding the ability to comprehend irreversible changes such as deaths (Dyregov 2008, 17).[1] Things do not end irrevocably; they happen again and again, often at regular times. How could a particular person and everything that they do be *gone forever*?

Likewise, there are distinctive ways in which children are integrated into the worlds of loving parents. The parent's own life structure involves furthering that of the child; it is oriented toward possibilities that extend beyond the lifetime of the parent. Hence, a child's death can involve losing a future that transcends one's own, upon which one's values, commitments, projects, and hopes depended. As Rando (1986, 11) observes, parents who grieve over the death of their child are also faced with "the need to relinquish all the hopes, dreams, and expectations that they had for and with that child."

The personal aspects of grief vary too. For instance, types of relationships and their more specific qualities will influence how the *style* of the person who died affected and continues to affect one's world. In any given case, many other factors will also contribute to how grief is experienced: the circumstances of the death (e.g., whether it was avoidable, premature, or violent); relations with others (including family, friends, and colleagues); social and cultural context; gender; ability to understand what has happened; and various personal circumstances (e.g., health, education, financial situation, and other past, ongoing, and/or anticipated life events). Even where bereavements are in most respects comparable, the process of experiencing, comprehending, and engaging with a loss of possibilities is compatible with different coping styles. For instance, Martin and Doka (2000, 2) identify a broad distinction between "intuitive" patterns of grieving, which involve expressing emotions and seeking emotional support,

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and "instrumental" patterns, which involve focusing on practical tasks. Most grief experiences fall somewhere on a spectrum between the two. However, a tendency toward instrumental patterns is more typical of men, a difference that Martin and Doka attribute to gendered socialization patterns. They add that there is insufficient evidence for the view that one of these responses involves a better way of adjusting to loss than the other.

Throughout my discussion, I have focused on bereavements that affect people profoundly, where there is both a pervasive disturbance of the experiential world and a pronounced sense of personal loss. Nevertheless, my account applies equally to experiences of grief that are not so pronounced or prolonged. Here, the relevant phenomenological changes will be similar in kind, but more localized, less conspicuous, and/or shorter-lived. Much of what I have said also extends to experiences of loss that do not stem from bereavement, including losses of bodily capacities, interpersonal relationships, and employment. All involve experiencing and engaging with losses of possibilities. In the case of bereavement, there is often a stark contrast between "before" and "after"; the loss of possibilities originates in a specific event—the death. But not all experiences of bereavement are like this. Sometimes, there is no single moment, no stark contrast, no unambiguous transition. By conceiving of grief as a temporally extended engagement with a variably cohesive loss of possibilities, we can accommodate a diversity of loss experiences.

Consider, for instance, the notion of "anticipatory grief."[2] We might think of this as a form of grief elicited by the *expectation of loss*, as when one knows that someone has a terminal illness. More generally, though, the emotions associated with expecting something tend to differ in kind from those elicited by its actual occurrence. For instance, we do not ordinarily dread what has already happened, feel guilt over what we have not yet done, or feel relief as we look forward to completing a demanding task that we have just started. Given this, one might question whether what is experienced in anticipating bereavement itself amounts to grief. However, if grief is a temporally extended engagement with a loss of possibilities, then it is clear that people can indeed experience grief in these circumstances. The anticipated loss of possibilities is also an actual loss of possibilities. In knowing that someone does not have long to live, we recognize that certain possibilities have been extinguished—we will never buy that house by the sea together; she will not be there for my graduation; he will never meet his

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grandchildren. Even before the death, those possibilities are already experienced as gone (Doka 2002, 12). While certain possibilities may be lost due to the fact that a person will soon die, others may be lost due to their declining health and abilities: "caring for someone with dementia for so long has made me think about losing that person for a very long time. . . . She was there in body, but not the person she once was" (#168). Thus, losses of possibilities can be traceable to sequences of events that stretch out over a long period, rather than to a single moment with a "before" and an "after."

Experiences of loss can also remain conflicted for prolonged periods (in ways that may or may not reflect the realities of one's situation). The sense of loss remains incomplete or inconclusive, due to the persistence of a competing system of anticipation—perhaps my relationship with him is not over after all; she might still recover from this; maybe they will change their minds about terminating my employment contract; there's still a chance I will get pregnant. Such conflict can also arise in the context of bereavement. Pauline Boss has introduced the term "ambiguous loss" to refer to losses that remain "unclear, indeterminate" (Boss 1999, 5–6). There are two broad types of ambiguous loss. In one type of case, a person who is still alive and physically present has changed radically due to circumstances such as chronic illness or serious injury. In the other, a person is physically absent, but lingering doubts remain over whether, when, and how they died. For instance, they may have been involved in a war, accident, or natural disaster, after which no body was ever recovered, or they may have simply disappeared (Boss 1999, 8–9). Ambiguous loss thus spans a range of very different circumstances. Some involve not knowing what has happened or what will happen, while others involve a current situation that is challenging to make sense of—is this still the person I love, or isn't it? But central to all cases is the persistence of competing possibilities—maybe she's not dead; perhaps that's still him after all. So, in thinking of grief in terms of lost possibilities, it should be added that this sometimes involves an enduring sense of uncertainty or indeterminacy concerning what might have happened or what is now the case. In these circumstances, one can vacillate between hope and resignation for an indefinite period. The process of moving between worlds is therefore impeded and, in part at least, suspended. To the extent that a current situation remains unclear, uncertainty also remains over which aspects of one's world are no longer sustainable, how to make sense what has happened, and how to reorganize one's life accordingly.

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Hence, various different experiences can be thought of in terms of losses of possibilities that we recognize, comprehend, and engage with over time. I have suggested that bereavement differs qualitatively from wholly impersonal forms of loss. Although the latter can involve comparable disturbances of the experiential world, they lack the distinctively interpersonal elements described in chapters 5–7. That said, the phenomenological boundaries are often unclear, as when losing a job also involves losing multiple friendships or when a loss of bodily capacities contributes to the collapse of a relationship. Experiences of bereavement often involve a distinctive sense of *someone else's lost possibilities*. Nevertheless, they still have much in common with other forms of personal loss, such as relationship breakups, being unable to have children, and experiencing a significant change in someone we love. In all these cases, we lose access to distinctive ways of affecting and being affected by another person.

My account of grief is thus intended to be broad in scope, accommodating the full range of loss experiences.[3] When it comes to understanding a *particular* experience of grief or loss, it can serve as an interpretive framework for approaching experiences of the type in question, through which we can then proceed to discern features that render a person's grief distinctive. So, offering generalizations to the effect that "grief consists in *x* and *y*" is not intended as a substitute for the important task of engaging with grief experiences in their particularity. Even so, the nature of any particular experience of grief can only be adequately understood once the phenomenological profundity, complexity, and diversity of grief in general is acknowledged. This then enables us to appreciate what makes someone's grief distinctive, how it reflects the unique structure of the person's life.

A further issue that arises in contemplating the diversity of grief is that of whether, when, and why grief or certain kinds of grief are *inappropriate*. Different categories of norms inform such judgments. In chapter 2, I noted that grief not only *ought to* proceed in certain ways, but that it *must* do, if there is to be eventual reconciliation between what has happened and one's life structure. So, if that endpoint is assumed to be desirable, we can distinguish forms of grief that are appropriate, insofar as they follow a route toward it, from others that deviate. It should be added, though, that matters are not always so straightforward. For instance, in a case of ambiguous loss, it may be unclear whether, when, or how to reorganize one's life.

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It has also been suggested that grief is responsive to moral norms (Solomon 2004b; McCracken 2005). However, as discussed in chapter 6, it is doubtful that there is any general obligation to grieve. Rather, people have a host of different obligations to those who have died, stemming from the particularities of their relationships, specific commitments that were made, and more widely accepted social and cultural norms. None of these are straightforward moral obligations *to grieve*. Nevertheless, experiences of grief and their course are indeed influenced by shared moral norms, as well as by religious norms, norms of etiquette, and norms attaching to culturally diverse rituals and practices. One might respond that these are all norms of "mourning" rather than "grieving." However, we have seen how the temporal structure of grief depends on regulatory processes that are interpersonally and socially distributed, rather than wholly internal to the individual. Given this, it would be untenable to maintain that the full range of norms associated with bereavement influence mourning (construed as participation in practices and rituals) but not grieving (construed as a temporally extended emotion process). For instance, whether shared narratives and practices emphasize severing or retaining bonds with the deceased will influence how experiences are interpreted (by the bereaved and by others), whether certain experiences are sought or avoided, and the kinds of interpersonal support that are available.

There are also norms relating to emotions in general. Emotions with identifiable objects are sensitive to reasons, as they gauge the significance of events and situations in relation to a life structure that incorporates certain values (Helm 2001). So, an emotional experience of loss is situationally inappropriate where it involves responding to something that does not matter relative to one's values or failing to respond in a certain way to something that does matter. An emotional response can also be appropriate in kind but not proportionate in its intensity or duration, either inadequate or excessive in relation to its object. In all such cases, one's emotional experience lacks integration; it fails to reflect the structure of one's life. Szanto (2017) thus refers to experiences of "emotional self-alienation," where emotional responses to situations and events become decoupled from one's overall "evaluative outlook" and may even conflict with it. Another form of impoverished emotional experience involves what Milligan (2008) calls "false emotion," as when people appear to grieve intensely over the deaths of public

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figures. According to Milligan, often they are not actually grieving, even though they may believe that they are. Their emotions do not have appropriate objects and their desires differ from those indicative of genuine grief. Hence, what we have is not a form of grief that fails to respect certain norms but an emotional experience that differs from grief in virtue of its departure from those norms. Milligan suggests that "false emotions" are sometimes to be regarded in an epistemically and morally positive light; the false emotion elicits activities that reshape one's evaluative tendencies, leading to other, genuine emotions. A similar point applies to "alienated" emotions, which have a potential role to play in reorganizing one's world. Emotions that are initially estranged from one's values could facilitate a shift in those values over time, whereby new things are experienced as important.

As grief is sensitive to various kinds of norms, a number of different questions can be formulated concerning its appropriateness and proportionality. Most of these do not pertain to the specific issue of whether, when, and why an experience of grief is *clinically* pathological. For instance, our emotions can deviate from our reasons without being "pathological" in that sense of the term. Likewise, departures from moral, religious, and cultural norms are not ordinarily deemed necessary or sufficient for pathological status, or even relevant to it in many instances.[4] Nevertheless, it has been suggested that some forms of grief do deviate from specifically medical norms. The claim is not merely that certain *token* grief experiences are inappropriate or disproportionate to their objects. Rather, certain *types* of grief are said to be inherently pathological, irrespective of the circumstances in which they arise. My focus in this book has been on more profound experiences of grief, which unfold over long periods of time. These sometimes resemble forms of experience associated with psychiatric diagnoses and, in particular, clinically significant depression. Other grief experiences are considered plausible candidates for pathological status without their meeting the diagnostic criteria for an established psychiatric condition. It has therefore been suggested that *disorders of grief* should be added to psychiatry's inventory of diagnostic categories.

Judgements of pathology are no doubt informed by wider assumptions concerning what is and is not appropriate during grief. For instance, whether one adopts a continuing bonds perspective is likely to influence one's thinking (Sanger 2009). There is also considerable cultural variation in what people take to be "normal" or "typical" of grief (Eisenbruch

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1984; Kleinman 2012). A further complication is that there is no consensus regarding the criteria that need to be met in order for something to qualify as a medical condition or, more specifically, a psychiatric disorder.[5] In the remainder of this chapter, I will not endorse any specific conception of "pathology" or, for that matter, of "pathological grief." Instead, my approach will be to consider forms of bereavement-related experience that have *already* been identified by others as candidates for pathological status and to ask what, if anything, distinguishes them from the full range of "typical" grief experiences.[6] Hence, I do not seek to determine whether or not these experiences are indeed pathological. My question is this: if they are pathological, which characteristics identify them as such? The answer, I will suggest, relates to the temporal structure of grief. Typical grief involves a dynamism and openness to new possibilities, which is lacking in those experiences identified as pathological. This temporal structure is inextricable from how we experience and relate to other people. It follows that the distinction between typical and pathological forms of grief—if it is to be endorsed at all—should be conceived of in relational terms.

8.2 Depression

My task in this section is to determine whether and how grief experiences that are intense and long-lasting, but nonetheless "typical," might differ from experiences that are consistent with clinically significant depression and, more specifically, major depressive disorder. Following this, I will turn to the view that there are forms of pathological grief that differ from both typical grief and depression. The issue of how to distinguish grief from major depression became especially prominent during development of the fifth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-5*). The fourth edition of the manual, or *DSM-IV*, acknowledges that the symptoms of grief overlap with those of depression. Nevertheless, a depression diagnosis is excluded where those symptoms are "better accounted for by Bereavement" (American Psychiatric Association 2000, 356). So, although the two may be phenomenologically similar, they can be distinguished causally. Where a symptom arises in the context of bereavement and is commonly associated with bereavement, it should not be attributed to depression. The proposal that this clause be removed from *DSM-5* proved controversial, partly due to worries about pathologizing

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typical grief. For example, Wakefield and First (2012) supported retention of a revised bereavement exclusion clause, arguing that "bereavement-related depressions" should be distinguished from major depressive episodes in many of those cases where symptoms would otherwise meet the diagnostic criteria for depression. In contrast, Zisook and Shear (2009, 70–71) insisted that the vast majority of bereavement experiences do differ from experiences of major depression. Furthermore, where the two do not differ, their trajectories and responses to treatment do not differ either. An exclusion clause, they argued, is unwarranted, given that a person can surely be both bereaved and depressed.[7]

In light of such exchanges, the importance of phenomenological research into this matter is clear. If the phenomenology of "normal" or "typical" grief cannot be reliably distinguished from that of major depression, then any proposed distinction must be based exclusively on nonphenomenological criteria. On the other hand, if there are significant phenomenological differences between the two, additional or alternative criteria may not be required. This need for phenomenological clarification is not limited to the *DSM* classification system. The questions of (a) whether and how depression and typical grief differ phenomenologically from each other and (b) whether any phenomenological differences are associated with different trajectories and outcomes are relevant to *any* attempt to classify, better understand, and respond to grief and depression, in clinical contexts and more widely.

Ultimately, *DSM-5* settled for something that I find somewhat unsatisfactory. It is stated that, although a response to loss may appear "understandable or appropriate," a depression diagnosis should still be "carefully considered" where symptoms overlap. This requires the "exercise of clinical judgment," something that should take individual history and the specifics of the situation into account. In a footnote, there is also an attempt to draw some phenomenological distinctions. Grief, it is noted, involves "feelings of emptiness and loss," whereas depression involves "depressed mood and the inability to anticipate happiness or pleasure." Positive emotions still occur during grief, while depression is more pervasive and persistent. In addition, grief usually involves retention of self-esteem, which sets it apart from the worthlessness and self-loathing typical of depression.[8] Thoughts of dying also differ in content; the depressed person may feel that she does not deserve to live, while the bereaved person is more likely to think of joining the deceased (American Psychiatric Association 2013, 161).

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Why is this unsatisfactory? First of all, we should note the frequent use of qualifications such as "likely to," "tend to," and "generally," which appear eight times in the footnote.[9] That an instance of condition X tends to or is likely to involve symptoms *p*, *q* and *r*, while an instance of condition Y is less likely to or tends not to involve those symptoms cannot facilitate a confident diagnosis of X and not Y, or vice versa. Furthermore, this lack of confidence is difficult to avoid, given that the diagnostic criteria for a major depressive episode admit considerable variety. A range of different predicaments could qualify as "major depression" by meeting at least one of the two principal criteria (depressed mood and diminished interest in activity), plus at least four of seven supplementary criteria. Indeed, three of the supplementary criteria are disjunctive: weight loss or gain; insomnia or hypersomnia; and psychomotor agitation or retardation (American Psychiatric Association 2013, 160–161). Such problems continue to apply if we instead appeal to different but closely related diagnostic labels, such as "clinically significant depression" or "severe depression." Regardless of which diagnostic system and which diagnostic categories we adopt, a particular grief experience might be easy enough to distinguish from a depression experience of one or another type, but not from all of the other experiences compatible with clinical depression.

First-person accounts of depression and grief can indeed look very similar. In both cases, there may be a lack of interest in activities, a sense of estrangement from other people and social situations, feelings of meaningless and hopelessness, bodily discomfort, fatigue, and changes in the experience of time, among other things. Nevertheless, where cursory diagnostic criteria fall short, there remains the possibility of a more detailed, discerning phenomenological analysis succeeding. What we will not end up with is a neat boundary, with typical grief on one side and depression on the other; boundaries will always be blurred and there will be plenty of in-between cases. A degree of idealization is therefore unavoidable. However, that there are cases involving features of both X and Y does not detract from the claim that X and Y are structurally very different, any more than the existence of hills detracts from the distinction between mountains and plains. The ability to make clear, principled phenomenological distinctions can therefore assist in determining whether certain cases fall into one or the other category, even if uncertainty remains over others. As Pies (2012) acknowledges, an "in depth understanding" of the phenomenology is needed, of a kind that "symptom checklists" do not facilitate. Many clinicians are no

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doubt already operating with something like this, in ways that have not been codified. But this does not detract from the need for explicit phenomenological work, at least under the assumption that it is desirable to be able to conceptualize and communicate the basis for one's clinical decisions and to agree upon shared standards for diagnosis.

In addressing the comparative phenomenology of typical and pathological grief, it is important to keep two issues distinct: (a) whether and how typical grief differs from major depression and/or other psychiatric conditions, and (b) whether typical grief itself involves a kind of medical disorder. Even if typical grief is distinguishable from all forms of psychiatric illness, it could still be regarded as pathological. For instance, Wilkinson (2000) suggests that grief is comparable to an injury such as a burn; in both cases, medical support may be required. But there is a need for caution here. The appropriate comparison is between *bereavement* and injury, rather than *grief* and injury. I suggested in chapter 3 that we could think of bereavement as an injury to the self and, more specifically, to a person's practical identity. That being the case, grief is comparable to the healing process, with typical grief corresponding to normal, healthy healing and pathological grief to disrupted or delayed healing. Even so, we could think of profound grief as akin to a healing process that is challenged by the severity of injury. In both cases, it is appropriate to consider forms of support, perhaps including medical intervention, rather than accepting that something can be left alone on the basis that it is "normal" or "typical" under the relevant circumstances. Nevertheless, I am concerned with a different issue here: whether a distinction can be drawn between cases where grief *itself* proceeds in a typical or appropriate manner and where it goes somehow wrong.

I am doubtful that clear phenomenological distinctions between typical and pathological forms of grief can be drawn by appealing to symptoms that might be experienced at a particular time, along with their duration. A more dynamic perspective is needed, emphasizing the movement of experience and the experience of its movement. When we attend to the temporal structure of grief and its dependence on interpersonal relations, it becomes clear that some phenomenological similarities are superficial and that there are in fact marked phenomenological differences. This is what we find in comparing typical grief to major depression, where three principal differences can be discerned:

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1. Grief involves losing what we might call *systems of possibilities*, while depression involves losing access to relevant *types* of possibilities.
2. Grief involves dynamic perspective-shifting, whereas depression involves a diminished ability to shift perspective.
3. Grief involves a continuing ability to relate to and feel connected with other people, the capacity for which is substantially diminished in depression.[10]

In both grief and depression, (1) to (3) should not be construed as separable components of experience that happen to accompany one another, and neither do they interrelate in merely causal ways. They are inextricable aspects of a unitary phenomenological structure. It should be conceded that major depression is heterogeneous, in ways that I have discussed at length elsewhere (Ratcliffe 2015). The same applies to typical grief, which spans a range of experiences. Nevertheless, depression experiences in general involve a pervasive sense of isolation, lack of dynamism, and loss of possibility.[11] This is quite different from the underlying structure of typical grief. *DSM-5*'s remarks on comparative phenomenology are suggestive of the relevant differences and can aid differential diagnosis. Nevertheless, there is a risk of superficially similar symptom descriptions obscuring substantial differences in how people relate to others and to the world in general. A more detailed phenomenological analysis can yield insights into underlying structural differences between experiences of grief and depression, enabling more discerning interpretations of first-person reports.

We have seen how grief involves disturbances of one's world, to be understood in terms of changes in the experience of possibilities. Cohesive networks of possibilities, such as doing *p* in order to do *q*, so as to achieve *r*, break down, insofar as their intelligibility, sustainability, or value depends on the deceased. To lose projects and pastimes is to lose idiosyncratic systems of possibilities, which are sometimes central to *who* one is or was. At first glance, this appears similar to losses of possibility described by those with depression diagnoses. However, there is an important difference between losing a specific arrangement of possibilities and losing access to possibilities of those *types*. For instance, the hope that *p* may become unsustainable when *p* depends upon a project that has collapsed, but losing any number of token hopes is distinct from losing the capacity for hope. Similarly, there is a difference between no longer finding anything practically

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significant in the ways one once did and losing the capacity to find anything practically significant.

In profound grief, it might seem that nothing matters or that all hope is gone. What may still endure, though, is an inchoate sense that life could one day be better than it currently is, that future goal-directed projects, enjoyable pastimes, and so forth remain possible.[12] What those with depression diagnoses often describe is something superficially similar to this, which likewise permeates how they experience and relate to the world as a whole. But depression involves a sense of stasis, inescapability, or irrevocability, which sets it apart from grief. Instead of losing a token *system* of possibilities, of a kind associated with specific projects and activities, one loses phenomenological access to possibilities of those *types*, eroding the sense that anything could ever differ from the present in a good way:

> When I'm depressed life never seems worth living. I can never think about how my life is different from when I'm not depressed. I think that my life will never change and that I will always be depressed. Thinking about the future makes my depression even worse because I can't bear to think of being depressed my whole life. I forget what my life is like when I'm not depressed and feel that my life and future is pointless.
>
> When depressed I feel I have no future and lose any hope in things improving in my life. I just feel generally hopeless.
>
> There seemed to be no future, no possibility that I could ever be happy again or that life was worth living.
>
> Life will never end, or change. Everything is negative. I lose my imagination, in particular, being able to imagine any different state other than depression. Life is a chore.[13]

Having "no future" is also a prominent theme in many accounts of grief. However, there is a difference between an inchoate, uncertain future that is bereft of possibilities once taken for granted and a future that no longer incorporates possibilities for certain kinds of positive change.[14] It can be added the experience of losing a system of possibilities in grief *is* at the same time the experience of a particular person's irrevocable absence. In chapter 2, we saw how the deceased is not merely an entity within one's world, which one cared about and continues to care about deeply, but also a condition of intelligibility for one's world. So, fully recognizing the loss of that person *implies* a pervasive phenomenological change. The death of a system of possibilities is inextricable from the death of that individual;

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a singular experience is both localized and all-enveloping. Given this, the world of grief has a particularity to it that the world of depression lacks. An inability to experience certain *types* of significant possibilities is not implied in the same way by anything that might have happened; it does not reflect the loss of anything or anyone in particular.

Of course, it might be objected that, in practice, depression will also be diagnosed in some of those cases where systems, rather than types, of possibilities are lost. That is surely so. But the problem then lies with current diagnostic criteria and practices, which are insensitive to substantial differences between forms of experience, rather than with phenomenological analyses that draw attention to those differences. If categories such as "major depression" do, in practice, accommodate experiences of both kinds, then it seems reasonable to propose that they be applied in more restrictive or discerning ways, so as to distinguish depression experiences where types of possibility are lost from superficially similar experiences, including some of those associated with bereavement.

The distinction between losing systems and types of possibilities relates closely to the process structure of grief, which involves negotiating a disturbance of one's world over time. Although losing systems of possibilities is consistent with that structure, losing access to certain types of possibilities involves a sense of being unable to escape one's current predicament, which appears neither contingent nor temporary. It could be objected that depression also has a process structure. Although the world might appear bereft of the potential for meaningful, positive change, people still become depressed, recover from depression, fall back into depression, and experience different degrees and kinds of depression at different times. However, my emphasis is on the phenomenology—grief is *experienced* in a more dynamic way. In more severe forms of depression, one's world no longer includes possibilities for significant, positive change and therefore seems inescapable. One cannot adopt a perspective outside of it; one cannot relive or imagine something that contrasts with it. Grief, on the other hand, involves an intensification of interaction between different and often conflicting perspectives. It is not simply that, with one's explicit acknowledgment of the death, a system of possibilities vanishes instantaneously. As discussed in chapter 2, the bereaved person continues to anticipate things in habitual ways, drifting into patterns of activity and thought that implicate the deceased. These are then disrupted by moments of recognition.

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There is an ongoing tension between contrasting ways of finding oneself in the world, as illustrated by passages such as the following:

> Later, at the motel, I stand in the darkened living room and stare out at the dark ocean—a stretch of beach, pale sand—vapor-clouds and a glimpse of the moon—the conviction comes over me suddenly *Ray can't see this*, *Ray can't breathe*. . . . As I've been thinking, in restaurants, staring at menus, forced to choose something to eat *This is wrong. This is cruel, selfish. If Ray can't eat.* (Oates 2011, 244)

The bereaved person also continues to remember what the world was *like* before the death and can imagine a counterfactual world where the death did not occur. So, her current predicament is experienced as contingent; it could have been otherwise. We should not conceive of these conflicting and contrasting perspectives as wholly separate from one another; it is not simply that perspective *c* follows *b*, which follows *a*. Perspectives overlap, interact, and are reshaped in the process. In chapters 2 and 6, I mentioned Peter Goldie's comparison between the dynamic, tension-riddled structure of autobiographical memory in grief and free indirect style in literature, a way of writing that combines internal and external perspectives on a situation. As he writes, "When you grieve, you often look back on the past, on your time together with the person you loved, knowing now what you did not know then: that the person you loved is now dead, and that you now know the manner and time of the dying" (Goldie 2012, 65). The gulf and conflict between worlds past and present are thus integral to one's current experience. When recalling time spent with the deceased, memories are infused with the present. Yet they also include a sense of one's current perspective as a contingent one; things as they are differ in pronounced and important ways from how they once were and how they might have been.

Depression, in contrast, is characterized by a diminished ability to move between and combine perspectives in this fashion. One cannot *see outside*; things could not be otherwise. Although one might remember *that* things were not always like this, one remains unable to rekindle a sense of what it was like for them to be different or to imagine what it would be like. So, diminished or lost access to types of possibilities applies not only to experiences of one's current predicament but also to memories, imaginings, and expectations. The narratives of those who are depressed therefore lack, to varying degrees, a movement between points of view that we find in first-person accounts of grief and also in autobiography more generally. Byrom Good (1994, 153–155) notes this difference in contemplating illness

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narratives. Such narratives, he observes, usually include "multiple perspectives and disparate points of view," concerning both what has happened and what might happen. However, the "quality of subjunctivity and openness to change" is lacking in "narratives of the tragic and hopeless cases." Similarly, grief involves a sense of contingency that is diminished in depression. Indeed, the gulf between before and after is especially pronounced in grief, as is the movement between divergent perspectives.

A more profound loss of possibility need not involve greater distress. The grieving person remains capable of imagining a world where the death did not happen. She might run through events in detail, wonder how they could have turned out differently, what could or should have been said and done. Counterfactual thinking of this kind can be highly distressing (Neimeyer, Pitcho-Prelorentzos, and Mahat-Shamir 2021). Furthermore, the repeated negation of numerous habitual expectations makes the gulf between worlds past and present painfully conspicuous. Of course, depression also involves pervasive feelings of absence and lack. Nevertheless, the movement between perspectives that we see in grief is distinct from the erosion of that movement, and the recognition of its erosion, in depression.

In the cases of both depression and grief, the phenomenological changes that I have described are inextricable from interpersonal experience and relatedness. In grief, the interplay between conflicting perspectives involves a continuing appreciation of what it is relate to someone in a certain kind of way, to *feel* connected to them. In depression, the sense of being able to relate to anyone in that way is diminished; there is an insurmountable isolation from others in general: "when we experience everyday sorrow, we generally feel—or at least are capable of feeling—*intimately connected with others*. . . . In contrast, when we experience severe depression, we typically feel outcast and alone" (Pies 2008, 3). This isolation is inseparable from an experiential world that is bereft of possibilities for meaningful action. Almost all of our activities implicate other people in some way and, without any prospect of the relevant kinds of interpersonal relations, they become unsustainable. This is not to suggest that the bereaved invariably continue to *feel connected* to people in general. One might feel profoundly isolated from everyone or almost everyone. Even then, though, some form of connection with the person who died may remain. Grief also involves various ways of experiencing the absence of the deceased. As we have seen, there is an intricate, dynamic interplay between presence and absence. But,

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throughout all these experiences, what is retained is the capacity for a certain *type* of connection with others, of a kind that I have described in terms of being affected by the *style* of another person. What is lacking, and experienced as lacking, is the ability to relate to a specific individual in ways that one once did. In contrast, a consistent theme in first-person accounts of depression is the experienced inability to relate to people in that *type* of way, to feel connected to anyone:

> There is the realization you have never connected with anybody, truly, in your life. Family are self-centred and shaming, either ignore comments which don't fit with their picture of how things should be going or they decide that shaming you into "pulling yourself together" will sort it out.
>
> People change from being people who I love and am connected with to being hosts of a parasite—me. I can't see why anyone would like me, want me, love me.[15]

A depression narrative might well refer to relationships with particular individuals. However, there is also a wider-ranging change in the structure of interpersonal experience, a loss of access to interpersonal relations of the kinds that more usually sustain one's projects and imbue the world with meaningful possibilities. One way of putting this is to say that depression involves a change in *existential feeling*, which is qualitatively different from any such change that we find in typical grief. "Existential feeling" is a technical term that I introduced to refer to a felt sense of reality and belonging, which varies interpersonally and temporally in ways that can be subtle or more profound. For instance, people sometimes talk of feelings of unreality, heightened reality, unfamiliarity, homeliness, being lost or adrift, being at one with things, and so on. I have suggested elsewhere that this aspect of experience can be analyzed in terms of the *kinds* of possibilities that we are open to. A change in existential feeling could thus involve everything appearing bereft of practical significance, imbued with an air of threat, or accessible to other people but not to oneself (Ratcliffe 2005, 2008, 2015). Depression involves lost or diminished access to types of possibilities that are retained in typical grief, and often an experience of one's world *as* bereft of those possibilities. While grief may involve losing a system of hopes that depended upon the deceased, depression involves an erosion of the capacity for hope, of one's sense that the world incorporates the possibility of positive change (Ratcliffe 2015, chap. 4). Typical grief involves changes in existential feeling as well, but these changes are importantly different. In profound grief, the types of possibilities that one loses access to are those

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that depend on having a structured, temporally stable experiential world. With the world in flux, with pervasive experiences of tension and indeterminacy, what is lacking from experience as a whole is a sense of confidence, dependability, and familiarity. This amounts to a wide-ranging and prolonged *feeling of being lost*, something that is incompatible with experiencing things in certain *ways*, those that involve confident anticipation of significant possibilities that relate to an established, stable life structure.

Of course, experiences of grief can differ markedly from one another, depending in part on how one relates to others, both the living and the dead. In some instances, the boundary between grief and depression will be clearer than in others. Nevertheless, an informative phenomenological distinction (one that admittedly involves some degree of idealization and also allows for borderline cases) can be drawn between losing a particular person, along with an associated system of possibilities, and losing types of possibilities. This distinction may not map onto current diagnostic categories. But, if that is so, then phenomenological research can contribute to a case for revision, at least if diagnostic practice is geared toward identifying differences that are pragmatically relevant. Those differences surely include features of a condition that interfere with the ability to contemplate or seek positive change.

8.3 Pathological Grief

I have suggested that the stasis of depression distinguishes it from the dynamism and openness of typical grief. However, it is important to acknowledge that certain grief experiences also lack dynamism, while still differing from depression. Unlike the inescapability of depression, which involves feeling disconnected from others in general, the stasis of grief can originate in a way of relating to a particular individual—the person who has died. In chapter 6, I drew attention to a form of grief that involves an enduring connection with the deceased and an associated detachment from the dynamic world of the living. As Riley (2012, 60) writes, "In essence you *have* stopped. You're held in a crystalline suspension." Insofar as one's world is bereft of certain kinds of meaningful transition, this experience resembles depression (Ratcliffe 2015, chap. 7). Even so, the two remain importantly different. The loss of possibilities for positive, meaningful change that we find in depression is inextricable from an inability to be affected by others,

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to relate to them in ways that open up new possibilities. In contrast, what Riley describes is an enduring connection with a particular person, which involves recognizing that person's irrevocable absence and somehow participating in their complete loss of possibilities.

Should experiences such as Riley's be regarded as pathological? My intention here is not to arbitrate. Instead, I am concerned with whether phenomenological differences can be discerned that set apart those grief experiences identified as candidates for "pathological" status from the full range of "typical" grief experiences. An enduring preoccupation with the deceased, involving disengagement from the social world, is central to what has often been termed "complicated grief."[16] Grief of this kind is identified as pathological due to its association with heightened, prolonged distress and long-term impairment of social function. According to Prigerson et al. (1995, 68–70), who devised a measurement scale called the Inventory of Complicated Grief, the principal symptoms include "preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased, crying, searching and yearning for the deceased, disbelief about the death, being stunned by the death, and not accepting the death." Other symptoms mentioned include "distrust and detachment from others," avoidance of reminders, hallucinations of the deceased, and feelings of emptiness, anger, guilt, loneliness, bitterness, and envy (of those who have not endured comparable bereavements).[17] In conjunction with these symptoms, the *duration* of complicated grief is said to set it apart from typical grief. It is a "psychopathological diagnostic entity" involving a set of symptoms that are "slow to resolve" and may "persist for years if left untreated" (Lichtenthal, Cruess, and Prigerson 2004, 637).

Other terms, descriptions, and diagnostic criteria have also been proposed in recent years for referring to and reliably identifying pathological grief. The category "Prolonged Grief Disorder" appears in the current version of the World Health Organization's *International Classification of Diseases* (*ICD-11*). This condition is described as a "persistent and pervasive grief response," which lasts for at least six months and does not conform to cultural norms. It involves preoccupation with or longing for the deceased, accompanied by a range of painful emotions. There is also disengagement from social activities and "significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning."[18] Initially, *DSM-5* opted instead for "Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder" as a diagnosis to be considered for inclusion in future editions

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(American Psychiatric Association 2013, 789–790). However, with the conclusion of discussions that began in 2019, it was instead agreed that the diagnosis "Prolonged Grief Disorder" would appear in the 2022 text revision of *DSM-5* (with diagnostic criteria that are similar but not identical to the *ICD-11* criteria).[19]

Another term that sometimes features in discussions of pathological grief is "traumatic grief." As with talk of complex, persistent, or prolonged grief, this is intended to identify something distinct from both typical grief and depression. It is also said to differ from posttraumatic stress disorder, given that the symptoms of the two conditions overlap rather than coincide (Neria and Litz 2004). Furthermore, application of the term "traumatic grief" is not always limited to bereavements that we might classify as especially traumatic because of the closeness of a relationship and/or the circumstances of a death. It can refer to a type of grief experience that is identified independently of such causes. What distinguishes this from traumatic experiences more generally is traumatic grief's preoccupation with separation and loss (Prigerson et al. 2000).

In contrast, others have argued that a separate diagnostic category for pathological grief is not needed at all and that established diagnostic categories such as major depressive disorder suffice for clinical purposes (Bonanno and Kaltman 2001). However, I have already indicated that pathological grief and major depression are sometimes phenomenologically distinguishable, as they can involve different ways of relating to other people. Instead, I want to suggest that conceptions of pathological grief continue to accommodate some importantly different forms of experience and may therefore be insufficiently discerning. The principal phenomenological differences between typical and pathological grief will not be captured by appealing to a distinctive pattern of symptoms that might be present at a particular time and to how long those symptoms last or how frequently they occur. Instead, we again need to focus on the *temporal structure* of experience.[20] Integral to typical grief, but lacking in those grief experiences identified as pathological, is a dynamic engagement with one's loss of possibilities, which involves eventually coming to inhabit a world that is largely consistent with the death. Neimeyer (2006, 143) thus emphasizes the failure of "integration" in pathological grief and how this amounts to a "crisis in meaning that simultaneously deprives the survivor of a significant past, a comprehensible present, and a purposeful future."[21]

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However, experiences of different kinds are compatible with this lack of dynamism and integration. As we have seen, one of these involves experiencing, thinking about, and relating to the deceased in such a way that one becomes detached from the social world and from shared time. Another form of experience is characterized by an inability or reluctance to acknowledge the death and its implications. Instead, one preserves a world that is no longer sustainable by turning away from areas of one's life that serve as reminders of loss. This could involve avoiding thoughts of the deceased altogether. But it is also consistent with thinking of the deceased as though they were still alive and sometimes acting in associated ways. What is important, then, is not just *whether* and how often one experiences and thinks about the person who has died but *how* one does so. There is a failure to fully acknowledge that one's relationship with that person, and with the world as a whole, has to change. We can thus distinguish three ways of relating to the deceased: (a) integrating the loss into one's life structure and altering one's relationship with the deceased accordingly; (b) experiencing, thinking about, and relating to the person who has died in a way that acknowledges the death but removes one from life; and (c) continuing to relate to the deceased and the surrounding world in ways that do not acknowledge the death. Typical grief involves variants of (a), whereas pathological grief may encompass various different combinations of (b) and (c), with one or the other predominating at any given time.[22] Although acknowledgement and denial of loss are seemingly opposed, (b) and (c) can interfere in complementary ways with the reorganization of an experiential world.

A different type of experience, which is equally compatible with certain descriptions of pathological grief, consists of a pronounced and pervasive sense of indeterminacy (of the kind identified in chapter 4), combined with lack of access to interpersonal and social processes that might otherwise enable one to navigate it. This does not involve holding onto a world that is past and neither does it require a continuing relationship with the deceased. Instead, there is a loss of life structure, combined with an inability to assemble new structure. So, although one no longer resides in a world that has been rendered unsustainable by the death, what this predicament shares with a world that resists revision is a lack of meaningful transition and consequent prolongation of suffering. As discussed in chapter 7, pervasive indeterminacy also amounts to a lack of regulatory structure for one's emotions, including emotions concerned with the person who has died.

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Hence, it can involve habitually and repeatedly "seeking" support from the deceased.

It is not always clear how the relationships between differing descriptions of "traumatic," "complicated," "persistent," and "prolonged" forms of grief are to be thought of. Although the various diagnostic criteria that have been proposed are similar, they are not identical and could therefore pick out different but overlapping sets of phenomena. Instead, though, they tend to be construed as competing ways of identifying the same condition. For instance, Jacobs, Mazure, and Prigerson (2000, 188) regard the term "traumatic grief" as "less vague" than "complicated grief" and thus better able to identify a distinctive form of grief. Similarly, Prigerson et al. (2009, 2) take the terms "prolonged grief disorder," "complicated grief," "complicated grief disorder," and "traumatic grief" to have a common referent. However, I suggest that all of these terms are compatible with importantly different forms of experience. Among the diagnostic criteria for traumatic grief proposed by Jacobs, Mazure, and Prigerson (2000, 189) is a "shattered worldview" involving a "lost sense of security, trust, or control." Various descriptions of complicated and prolonged grief similarly identify pervasive distrust, negative beliefs about the world, and detachment from other people as symptoms (e.g., Prigerson et al. 1995; Boelen, Van den Hout, and Van den Bout 2006; Neimeyer, Pitcho-Prelorentzos, and Mahat-Shamir 2021). Wide-ranging loss of trust is also a prominent theme in discussions of "traumatic experience" more generally.[23] But what impact would this have in the context of bereavement? Consider an experience involving substantial loss of life structure, with nothing to replace it yet. When combined with distrust in other people, this would amount to an even more profound sense of being lost—the way forward is unclear *and* there is no prospect of reliable guidance from elsewhere. In chapter 7, I suggested that we think of such experiences in terms of lacking access to regulatory processes that are interpersonal and social in nature, processes upon which the *movement* of grief depends. With pervasive lack of trust or active distrust, there is little or no prospect of anything new and meaningful in one's life. This is because almost all actual and potential projects depend for their viability on others behaving—for the most part—in dependable and benevolent ways. So, one is stranded in an indeterminate realm between old and new worlds. This is different from being cut off from other people and from processes of change because of an ongoing connection with the deceased (although an experience of grief

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could include both). It also differs from a grief that involves preserving an unsustainable world. In the latter case, however, the two forms of experience are incompatible; retaining a world is to be contrasted with leaving it behind and having nowhere else to go.

It is therefore doubtful that the various terms and criteria proposed for identifying pathological grief succeed in isolating a singular phenomenon. All of these labels accommodate grief experiences of different kinds, where either stasis or indeterminacy predominates. Furthermore, changing emphases in diagnostic criteria can be more suggestive of one or the other. For instance, although most descriptions of pathological grief refer at some point to distrust or closely related themes (such as insecurity and negative beliefs about the world as a whole), the *ICD-11* description of prolonged grief does not. Lost or diminished trust is similarly absent from the *DSM-5-TR* diagnostic criteria for prolonged grief (see, for example, Prigerson et al. 2021, 112).[24] Nevertheless, symptoms such as "disbelief about the death," "difficulty with reintegration into life," and "feeling that life is meaningless" could equally be interpreted in terms of preserving an unsustainable world or being unable to navigate indeterminacy due, in part, to loss of trust. Hence, such criteria remain compatible with importantly different forms of interpersonal experience. For instance, "yearning" against a backdrop of indeterminacy could involve habitually and repeatedly seeking the support of a principal regulator, something that is very different from a "preoccupation" with the deceased that involves sharing in their loss of possibilities (as described in chapter 6).[25]

Given that grief's trajectory is inextricable from how we relate to other people, differences between typical and pathological forms of grief should be conceived of in interpersonal and social terms. Bereavement, we have seen, can involve the erosion of habitual expectations concerning other people and the social world as a whole. Trust in others can be rendered fragile, as can a wider-ranging confidence in ourselves, the world, and the future. As Attig (2011, xlii) writes, "bereavement uproots our souls: We don't know quite *how* to trust what remains of the familiar, make ourselves at home again in the world, or live with and love others who survive with us." When we are in this situation, those trusting relations that remain intact have important roles to play in restoring a wider trust and confidence. However, such relations are often themselves more susceptible to disruption than usual, due to the same

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circumstances that lead us to rely upon them. Their loss has significant implications for our ability to retain and revise life structure.[26]

The forms of experience that I have identified as consistent with descriptions of "pathological grief" all involve changes in the balance between retention, loss, and revision of life structure, in the movement between worlds over time. Such changes can be thought of in terms of an "oscillation" process that Stroebe and Schut (1999, 2010) identify as essential to coping with bereavement. Oscillation is central to their *dual process model*, which distinguishes between loss- and restoration-oriented coping. Loss-oriented coping is concerned with the person who has died and their absence from one's life, whereas restoration-oriented coping is a matter of reorganizing one's life. According to Stroebe and Schut (1999, 215), unremitting grieving would be too psychologically demanding and so we instead "oscillate" between loss- and restoration-oriented processes. However, it is not clear that this would provide any respite, as both types of coping can be very demanding. Furthermore, the process of engaging with loss cannot be separated cleanly from that of restoration. Revision of projects, pastimes, commitments, and habits that presuppose the deceased involves the repeated negation of expectations involving that person and, with this, a sense of personal loss. Nevertheless, loss and restoration can at least be construed as different—although interrelated—emphases that our coping activities have at different times. But there are also times when we disengage from both, by participating in familiar or new activities in ways that do not relate to the bereavement or its implications. So, it should be added that, as well as oscillating between loss- and restoration-focused activities, we oscillate between coping per se and respite from it. These movements are inextricable—the dynamic between retention and revision of life structure depends on how and to what extent we engage with aspects of life that have become unsustainable, which depends on how we relate to the deceased and vice versa. In fact, this more complex picture seems to be what Stroebe and Schut have in mind. For instance, they write, "At times the bereaved will be confronted by their loss, at other times they will avoid memories, be distracted, or seek relief by concentration on other things" (Stroebe and Schut 1999, 215–216). Elsewhere, they explicitly distinguish moving between loss- and restoration-oriented activities from "taking respite" or "time out" from both (Stroebe et al. 2006, 2443–2444; Stroebe and Schut 2010, 278).

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With those qualifications in place, forms of pathological grief can be distinguished from one another in terms of an "oscillation" between retention and alteration of life structure, something that depends on a similarly dynamic relationship between personal and world-related aspects of grief. In one scenario, the bereaved person is so preoccupied with the deceased that she becomes disengaged from the present and from other people. There may also be times when she avoids reminders of loss and continues to think of the deceased in ways that are inconsistent with the death. Due to one or both of these factors, life structure is not revised over time in a manner that accommodates the death. There is what Stroebe and Schut (1999) call a "disturbance of oscillation." A process that alternates between retention and revision is skewed toward the former, due to interrelated ways of engaging with the world and with personal loss.

Another scenario, which I have not so far considered, involves a form of "restoration" that does not take adequate account of what has been lost—one leaps into new projects, activities, and relationships. Although this might seem quite different from an enduring sense of *loss*, it is also potentially compatible with descriptions of pathological grief. The loss and its implications are not integrated into one's world over time. With this, associated emotions do not change in ways that track a changing life structure. As Jordan and Litz (2014, 181) observe, "failure to fully face the reality of the loss may prolong emotional reactivity to loss reminders." Although one might try to get on with things, the distress experienced when one does confront the loss fails to decrease over time in the more usual way.[27] What has happened is not recontextualized; it continues to appear significant in the same way and perhaps to a similar degree.

Both of these scenarios are to be distinguished from one where indeterminacy predominates. Stroebe and Schut suggest that the oscillation process can break down altogether, rather than gravitating toward a particular pole. This is consistent with a combination of indeterminacy and loss of trust. The prospect of trusting relations with others is a prerequisite for being able to envisage a positive, meaningful future for oneself (Ratcliffe 2017, chap. 5). Without a world into which the death might be coherently integrated, the phenomenological structure required for oscillation is lacking. There is no coherent vantage point from which to engage with and adapt to personal loss or its implications for one's own life, leading to what Stroebe and Schut (1999, 218) call a "disturbance of the oscillation process itself."

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The roles of interpersonal and social relations in shaping grief over time are especially evident when we turn to *disenfranchised grief*, something that has been identified as a potential route to pathological grief. The term "disenfranchised grief" was coined by Kenneth Doka, to capture a form of grief "experienced by those who incur a loss that is not, or cannot be, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported" (Doka 1999, 37).[28] Disenfranchisement can have a variety of causes, including the nature of a relationship (e.g., an extramarital affair), a form of loss that is not widely recognized (e.g., when a person whom one loves undergoes radical change), a way of grieving that transgresses established norms (e.g., due to cultural differences), or the circumstances of a death (e.g., bereavement by suicide and other violent losses can be associated with stigma and widespread discomfort). However, a common theme is that others fail to acknowledge or legitimate one's grief, in ways that affect one's access to processes that shape grief's trajectory.[29] Central to disenfranchisement is a privation or alteration of interpersonal and social interactions that are more usually associated with bereavement.

As an illustration, let us return to the example of grief over involuntary childlessness (discussed in chapter 6). First-person accounts describe a widespread failure to acknowledge this type of loss, which influences how it is experienced and interpreted over time. There is usually nothing to mark the loss—no specific date, no event, no ceremony, and no memorial. This contributes to lack of recognition on the part of others that there has even been a *loss*:

> No one can understand what it's like to carry this loss. In their minds, no baby meant no loss. (#209)

> I raged, and still sometimes rage, at the obliviousness of most people to childless grief. (#223)

> For the most part, the loss is unrecognized, there have been few people who have treated being childless as a loss and have acted sensitively. (#262)

> To start with nobody got it. My grief was invisible. (#251)

Others' lack of understanding may be compounded by one's own inability to comprehend and articulate the nature of the loss, due to a lack of shared interpretive resources: "I couldn't find the vocabulary for my unexplained emotions because I had never experienced grief before" (#226); "I never realised this was grief until I found others in a similar situation"

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(#251). Some survey respondents explicitly refer to their grief as "disenfranchised" (perhaps having been introduced to the term via the support network Gateway Women).[30] The problem, they add, is not simply a lack of understanding on the part of particular people (including, sometimes, themselves); it also reflects engrained cultural attitudes that promote parenthood as a norm and include no acknowledgment of involuntary childlessness or the experience of exclusion it can involve:

> People can be incredibly judgmental and ignorant around involuntary childlessness. It can be hard to talk about as often people just make throwaway comments "you're lucky to have so much time" "I wish my house was this quiet!" or just don't say anything. (#225)

> Society does not make room for those women who are childless not by choice. (#221)

Thus, as with disenfranchisement more generally, these experiences stem from various sources, including lack of an identifiable date or event, inability to understand the nature of one's loss due to impoverished interpretive resources, lack of acknowledgment by specific individuals and society as a whole, exclusion from a culture (where much is focused around parenthood), and the absence of practices, rituals, norms, and narratives for conveying and acknowledging losses of the type in question. This may prohibit people from participating in interpersonal and social interactions that are integral to engagement with loss, shaping the nature of grief and its course over time. Disenfranchisement can involve a growing sense of alienation and distrust, relating to particular individuals, groups, organizations, events, and perhaps society as a whole. This, I have suggested, will inevitably affect the temporal structure of grief, the manner in which one engages with lost possibilities.

8.4 Resilience

A consideration of the interpersonal and social dimensions of grief can also inform our understanding of resilience. The structure and duration of grief processes is sometimes said to vary interpersonally in ways that reflect people's differing degrees of resilience. Furthermore, most of us turn out to be more resilient than we might anticipate. Most notably, the work of George Bonanno has documented the surprising frequency of resilience in the face of loss.[31] Now, suppose that resilient grief is the most common form of bereavement experience and that it involves, as Bonanno (2004,

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20) puts it, only "minor and transient disruptions" of functioning. On the basis of this, one might suppose that *profound* grief experiences, of the kinds that I have focused on, are in the minority. In fact, however, "resilience" appears to be consistent with substantial upheaval and distress. According to Bonanno (2009, 47), we are "surprised" by people's resilience, given an expectation that the recently bereaved will "feel constant sadness and grief." Contrary to this, he observes, they can still laugh, feel pleasure, and experience joy. Hence, it might seem that resilient grief is to be contrasted specifically with depression, a condition that involves the consistent diminution or loss of pleasure and joy. But there must be more to resilient grief than just *grief without depression*, since Bonanno (2004, 20–21) also distinguishes it from other grief experiences involving subclinical levels of distress.

It is not entirely clear what is to be excluded from the category of resilient grief. So, let us instead consider what it *does* include. Bonanno (2009, 8) acknowledges that, even for the resilient, grief can be a "powerful experience," which "dramatically shifts our perspective on life" and may elicit "existential questions." He adds that we may continue to experience "at least a bit of wistful sadness" for a long time. Later on, he writes that "most bereaved people" experience "some temporary confusion about their identity," even "losing track of who they are or what their life means" (Bonanno 2009, 97). That resilient grief can involve "dramatic shifts" of this nature suggests that it is, after all, compatible with most of the grief experiences that I have described in this book, the only uncontroversial exceptions being "prolonged," "persistent," "traumatic," or "complicated" forms of grief, and grief that involves depression. However, matters are not entirely clear, due to a consistent emphasis on people's sustained ability to *function* in their personal and professional lives, rather than on their experience. Resilience, for Bonanno (2004, 20), is a matter of maintaining a "stable equilibrium" that enables one to achieve this.

In those cases where many values, projects, pastimes, and habits have been rendered unsustainable or even unintelligible by bereavement, resilience cannot involve continuing to engage with one's surroundings in all or even most of the ways that one previously did. Under the assumption that resilience is possible under such circumstances, it presumably involves some combination of (a) being able to function in areas of one's life that are relatively unaffected by the bereavement and (b) changing other aspects of life structure over time, so as to accommodate the implications of the death.

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It can be added that an ability to function practically (according to one or another measure of "function") in most or all aspects of life that remain viable is compatible with enduring considerable suffering and upheaval over a lengthy period:

> I find it's actually going worse on some days as the realisation that this is my life is starting to set in. I'm functioning well, however. (#100)

> In some ways it's a bit better and in others worse. I definitely miss my husband more as time goes on. I think this is something I didn't anticipate, but it makes sense, as it is longer since I saw him and spoke to him. If he was still alive, but I couldn't see him I would miss him more as time went by, so why should that be different because he's dead? On the other hand, I am a bit more functional, although my motivation has decreased. (#102)

Given this, the prevalence of resilient grief does not seem quite so surprising after all. Indeed, one might wonder who the "we" actually refers to, when "we" are said to have misleading intuitions concerning the usual trajectory of grief.[32] Furthermore, it looks as though the referent of "resilience" may turn out to be equivocal or unstable. What would indeed be surprising is if a significant bereavement involved swift adjustment, accompanied by a touch of transient sadness. But this is not, after all, what resilient grief amounts to; it encompasses a range of experiences, including profound forms of grief that unfold over long periods of time. The only consistent contrast is with a predicament involving the constant inability to feel pleasure or joy, combined with prolonged inability to engage with the practicalities of daily life.

Talk of resilience, combined with only cursory references to the phenomenology, thus risks understating both the complexity of emotional upheaval and the extent to which we are challenged by loss. There is a need to distinguish two importantly different scenarios. In one of these, a person's life is on a particular trajectory, is briefly knocked off course by bereavement or another form of loss, and then resumes its original trajectory. In the other, the person's life is knocked off course and she is then tasked with finding a new direction. So, where Bonanno and Kaltman (2001, 709) refer to a "common grief pattern," involving "moderate disruptions in cognitive, emotional, physical, or interpersonal functioning during the initial months," further detail is needed concerning what the associated experiences consist of. In the absence of this, it is unclear whether or to what extent these "moderate" impairments are consistent with substantial

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disturbances of life structure. In those cases where a significant loss is ultimately integrated into one's life, I have suggested that a lengthy process of reorientation is not merely commonplace but required. Tensions between experiences of presence and absence, past and current perspectives, and one's own experiential world and that of others are unavoidable. Hence, if resilient grief were incompatible with all of this, it could not be true that people are generally resilient in that type of situation.

If resilience is compatible with navigating significant disturbances of one's world, then it is something that depends—at least in part—on interpersonal and social processes. Resilience, whatever it might involve, does not consist exclusively of internal psychological properties of the individual. How one responds to a bereavement depends to a large extent on one's interpersonal and social situation beforehand, along with how that situation changes during the time leading up to and following the death. This is not to suggest that other people and the wider social world are always principally responsible for determining the course of grief. Sometimes, a person will be largely impervious to any support that might be offered and, with this, to social processes that would otherwise regulate grief. Nevertheless, it remains the case that resilience is relational in nature; it consists partly in the ability or inability to access interpersonally and socially distributed processes. Furthermore, there will be many instances where interpersonal and social circumstances do have important roles to play, where it is misleading to think of resilience or its absence as enduring characteristics of individuals.[33] People also vary considerably in the extent to which they draw upon others for regulatory support and the ways in which they do so. In addition, some will rely on enduring social arrangements while others draw on relations that are more transient and less dependable. One person's "resilience" will therefore be fragile in ways that another's will not be. Given all of this, in conjunction with the diversity of "typical" grief experiences, it is unclear whether "resilience" is consistently associated with any one individual trait. A range of different factors contribute to a person's capacity to navigate loss on any particular occasion.

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9 The Phenomenological Significance of Grief

Throughout this book, I have been concerned primarily with phenomenological issues: what it is to *experience* grief and what might be learned about human experience more generally by reflecting on grief. Although my discussion is not explicitly situated within the phenomenological tradition, I have drawn on themes in that tradition throughout and, in particular, on the work of Merleau-Ponty. In so doing, I have focused on two main themes: (a) the world that is more usually taken for granted as a backdrop to our experiences, thoughts, and activities; and (b) what it is to experience someone in a distinctively personal way. In combining the two, I have emphasized—above all else—our experience of *possibilities* and how it is bound up with interpersonal relations.

This concluding chapter will reflect on the implications of my account for our understanding of phenomenological enquiry itself. If human experience is structured in the ways I have described, what does this say about the nature of phenomenological thought? What might it have in common with the experience of grief? And what are its limitations? Hence, this is an exercise in what we might call *meta-phenomenology*: the task of reflecting on the nature of phenomenological research in light of its subject matter.

By returning again to Merleau-Ponty, I will suggest that profound grief serves to make explicit precisely those aspects of experience that phenomenologists draw attention to and seek to describe. There is a structural similarity between the phenomenology of grief and a kind of perspectival shift that is common to work in the phenomenological tradition. Of course, there are important differences as well. For instance, grief is not attached to a specific theoretical framework, and phenomenological enquiry need not be distressing. Nevertheless, phenomenological method, at least as conceived

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of by Merleau-Ponty, requires a change in perspective that is essentially *felt*. Like grief, it can involve a sense of disorientation and puzzlement, as well as the challenge of using established language to articulate something that our words more usually presuppose. This indicates a limit to phenomenological thought. In ceasing to take various aspects of experience for granted and instead making them explicit objects of reflection, we eventually reach a point where linguistic thought is no longer possible. It is not a matter of being unable to find the right intellectual path, but of lacking the conditions of intelligibility for linguistic thought. Like grief, phenomenological thought must find a balance between continuing to inhabit a world and leaving it behind.

9.1 Grief and Phenomenological Method

Phenomenological research can be construed in a permissive way, as any form of enquiry concerned primarily with the nature of experience. But what distinguishes work in the phenomenological tradition, encompassing the likes of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir, and Sartre, is the adoption of a distinctive methodological perspective or stance. Despite many differences in how phenomenologists conceptualize and describe this, there is a common, underlying theme. In naive phenomenological reflection, one might contemplate *what it is like* to perceive, remember, imagine, or think something or other, what it is like to act, what is like to have certain bodily feelings, and so on. However, reflection of this kind continues to presuppose, and thus fails to acknowledge, a more fundamental phenomenological achievement: already finding oneself immersed in a shared world. It is *within* this world that we have experiences and thoughts with specific contents, such as seeing a car, hearing music, or thinking that it might rain (Ratcliffe 2015, chap. 1).

A consistent theme in the phenomenological tradition is the need to apply some kind of procedure in order to make the world explicit as a phenomenological achievement, such that it then becomes accessible to study. There are very different accounts of what this might involve, which are compatible to varying degrees. In the preceding chapters, I did not explicitly endorse any such perspective. Furthermore, rather than limiting myself to work in the phenomenological tradition, I adopted a more permissive approach, which involved drawing on a wider philosophical literature and

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on work in several other academic disciplines. Even so, I have emphasized that, in order to appreciate the phenomenological structure of grief, we must come to recognize the contingency and changeability of an experiential world that is more usually presupposed by explicit reflection, operating as a context *within which* enquiry proceeds. As we reflect on the phenomenology of grief, a number of themes are brought to light, including the structure of world experience, the pervasiveness of habitual patterns of anticipation, and how interpersonal experience is inseparable from a sense of the possible. Hence, although the approach I have adopted here does not limit itself to the phenomenological tradition, the position and philosophical perspective that I arrive at remain very much in the spirit of that tradition. However, rather than explicitly imposing a phenomenological perspective from the outset, I have sought to show how the subject matter of grief can serve to nurture such a perspective. So, in addition to being a subject matter for phenomenological research, the topic of grief can be integral to its method, promoting a certain kind of philosophical thought.

Grief also points to a more specific conception of phenomenological thought. How is it that we are able to recognize and reflect upon an ordinarily presupposed world? And where do the limits of phenomenology lie—how far can we go in suspending our habitual acceptance of things? If the everyday world is to become explicit as a phenomenological achievement, we cannot continue to rely exclusively on ways of thinking and speaking that presuppose it. How, though, do we move beyond them? One approach is to reflect on disruptions of world experience, which either occur within one's own life or are conveyed by others. Another, compatible approach is to actually elicit disruptions of certain kinds. In the work of Merleau-Ponty, we find both. His conception of phenomenological method resembles, in revealing ways, the dynamic phenomenological structure of grief. According to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology does not provide straightforward answers to preestablished questions. Consider this well-known passage from *Phenomenology of Perception*:

> Perhaps the best formulation of the reduction is the one offered by Husserl's assistant Eugen Fink when he spoke of a "wonder" before the world. Reflection does not withdraw from the world toward the unity of consciousness as the foundation of the world; rather, it steps back in order to see transcendences spring forth and it loosens the intentional threads that connect us to the world in order to make them appear; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals the world as strange and paradoxical. (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, lxxvii)

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The phenomenological "reduction" to which Merleau-Ponty refers is a methodological shift advocated by Husserl, whereby we come to study the world as a phenomenological achievement, having first suspended our habitual acceptance of it.[1] Unlike Husserl, Merleau-Ponty accepts that the phenomenologist cannot somehow suspend all aspects of habitual acceptance, thereby coming to reflect upon the structure of human experience without presupposing anything of it. Instead, we gain insights into that structure by attending to incomplete disturbances, which make salient at least something of what is more usually presupposed. The "intentional threads" slacken, enabling reflective access to what our thoughts and words ordinarily inhabit and overlook.

This procedure is not just a matter of adopting a distinctive theoretical perspective that leads to new propositional knowledge. As Merleau-Ponty writes in his late and incomplete work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, philosophy "interrogates the perceptual faith—but neither expects nor receives an answer in the ordinary sense" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 103). What, then, does this kind of philosophical enquiry consist of? One thing that distinguishes it from answering preestablished questions in preconceived ways is the experience of revelation—the discovery of something that alters one's conception of philosophical enquiry and its subject matter. The "perceptual faith," or overarching style of experience, is no longer obliviously presupposed. As when the world is shaken by grief, it comes to be recognized as a contingent achievement, something that could give way to a pervasive sense of unpredictability and indeterminacy. Instead of looking down to find a smooth, solid, monochrome floor beneath our feet, constantly supporting us in an unchanging way, we are confronted by a vast, stormy cavern. During both grief and phenomenological enquiry, the glimpsing of underlying phenomenological achievements involves a sort of emotional recognition. In the passage from Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* quoted above, this takes the form of "wonder." Grief, in contrast, involves a sense of bewilderment and being lost. Even so, there is a revelatory quality common to both. We saw in chapter 3 how a sense of the possible is inextricable from feelings of certain kinds, including emotional feelings. Thus, insofar as recognizing a cohesive, dynamic arrangement of possibilities as a phenomenological achievement involves disruption of that arrangement, it also involves changes in feeling.

A phenomenological enquiry could proceed by engaging with one's own experience or that of others. Here, I have opted for the latter. But how, one

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might ask, can we be affected by the experiences of others in ways that are phenomenologically illuminating? That someone else experiences and describes a disturbance of world does not entail that we will recognize it as such. In fact, how could we, unless we have *already* undergone the required perspectival shift? My account of grief points to an answer. To experience someone in a personal way is to be affected by their *style*, something that is peculiar to them. This includes being affected by disturbances of their style. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenological enquiry involves being affected by others in ways that disrupt one's own style of habitual immersion in the world. As he remarks in a discussion of hallucination, "the situation of the patient whom I question appears to me within my own situation and, in this phenomenon with two centers, I learn to know myself as much as I learn to know the other person" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 353). This applies equally to the case of grief; we can be affected in phenomenologically informative ways by the distinctive styles of those who are grieving. The contrast between one's own world and theirs, as manifested through interpersonal experience, reveals one's habitual immersion in the world to be a contingent and precarious phenomenological achievement.

Importantly, this point is not limited to face-to-face interaction; it also extends to the phenomenology of language. To see how, let us return to the structural similarities between language and world experience discussed in chapter 4. It might seem to naive reflection that perceptual experience reveals the constituents of a stable, fully determinate world. But this overlooks the way in which seemingly simple and effortless perceptual achievements are indebted to a history of habitual activities and associated patterns of anticipation. Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012, 194) suggests that, in the same way, "the clarity of language is in fact established against an obscure background." Linguistic meaning might appear stable, determinate, fully shared, and unproblematic, but this is only because we fail to recognize phenomenological achievements upon which it depends. According to Merleau-Ponty, everyday "language" follows familiar, preestablished trails. However, there is also "speech," which disrupts habitual arrangements, reveals their contingency, and opens up new possibilities:

> One can have no idea of the power of language until one has taken stock of that working or constitutive language which emerges when the constituted language, suddenly off centre and out of equilibrium, reorganizes itself to teach the reader—and even the author—what he never knew how to think or say. (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 14)

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Consider, for example, Merleau-Ponty's account of coming to understand another philosopher's thought, where this involves engaging with an original philosophical work. Rather than merely digesting a series of propositions and how they relate to one another, he maintains that we come to recognize and engage with a distinctive style. The overarching style of the work is something we may encounter before we have quite understood what is being said: "A philosophical text that remains poorly understood nevertheless reveals to me at least a certain 'style'—whether Spinozistic, critical, or phenomenological—which is the first sketch of its sense" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, 184–185). A more specific, determinate apprehension of that philosopher's thought then proceeds to coagulate. Finding one's way around a philosophical text thus resembles immersing oneself in and gradually coming to know an unfamiliar place, which has an initial, inchoate *feel* to it.

The nature of this elusive style and how a philosopher's position emerges from it depend on that philosopher's use of language. This is not just a matter of whether the philosopher uses certain terms rather than others or uses those terms in distinctive ways. Individual words hang together as parts of a larger pattern and cannot be grasped independently of their interrelations. We begin by attributing established, generic meanings but gradually come to appreciate subtle, distinctive, and interlocking ways of using words, as a unique *style* is progressively resolved (e.g., Merleau-Ponty 1964a, 91). With this, we also recognize the incompleteness of what is said. Our understanding is not limited to discerning what is already *there*, fully determinate. We also follow paths, whereby possibilities inherent in another person's thoughts are actualized.

In chapter 4, I suggested that Merleau-Ponty's distinction between a "language" that presupposes the world and a "speech" that embodies new possibilities is plausible to the extent that it illuminates aspects of linguistic experience in grief that are otherwise difficult to grasp. Words lose some of the possibilities more usually attached to them. With this, they are also used in different ways, sometimes expressing phenomenological disturbances through the manner in which they *misfire*. Words that ordinarily presuppose certain states of affairs are instead invoked to communicate how those states of affairs no longer apply: I am going back to a *home* without *him*, which is no longer a *home*. Merleau-Ponty regards this same linguistic duality as integral to phenomenological thought. By remaining within "language," we

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would presuppose the very achievements we seek to study. We also require "speech," which defamiliarizes established arrangements and points to new possibilities.

9.2 The Limits of Phenomenology

The comparison between grief and phenomenological thought also points to the *limits* of the latter. Grief can involve losing shared projects, habits, norms, and expectations that were presupposed by one's thoughts and activities. As discussed in chapter 4, this can amount to a pervasive sense of indeterminacy and of lacking direction. Sometimes, patterns of implication between propositions break down and words seem hollow, bereft of their usual meanings. The culmination of this would not be a complete emancipation from everyday assumptions but the impossibility of coherent, meaningful, linguistic thought. We thus have a way of understanding Merleau-Ponty's oft-quoted remark that grasping the true nature of the phenomenological reduction involves appreciating the "impossibility of a complete reduction" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, lxxvii). There is a limit to how far the phenomenologist can become unstuck from the world while still managing to think and say something.[2]

A more specific comparison can be drawn with the dynamic structure of grief. We have seen how profound grief involves a fragile balance between sustenance and loss of life structure. Imbalances can arise, involving either the preservation of a world that is no longer sustainable or a degree of indeterminacy so pronounced that it impedes or even prohibits development of a new life structure—there is not enough left to build on. During grief, we *alternate* between activities that continue to presuppose established life structure and others that involve disengaging from it and opening up new possibilities. According to Stroebe and Schut (1999), "oscillation" between engagement with and disengagement from loss is an unavoidable aspect of healthy grief, as incessant confrontation with loss would be psychologically unsustainable. To this, it can be added that a certain degree of phenomenological indeterminacy would deprive one of structure that is needed in order to navigate indeterminacy.

Phenomenological thought can be conceived of in an analogous fashion. It is not possible to think *outside* of the world, given that linguistic thought presupposes established, shared life structure. Consequently, some degree

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of "sedimented language" is unavoidable, and "speech" only ever involves a partial departure from it. We could not think with "speech" alone, as new possibilities arise in coherent ways only relative to already established systems of possibilities. However, engagement with speech is also transformative, opening up possibilities that may later become part of established patterns. In considering the comprehension of a text, Merleau-Ponty (1973, 13) remarks that there is always "the language the reader brings with him, the stock of accepted relations between signs and familiar significations without which he could never have begun to read." But, where there is also "speech," it can happen that "a certain arrangement of already available signs and significations alters and then transfigures each of them, so that in the end a new signification is secreted." Hence, in both grief and phenomenological enquiry, we do subtly different things with words, which are sometimes difficult to discern: using words in established, shared ways, in order to make points, and periodically disrupting those uses.

Phenomenology does not involve striving to understand something that is independent of the process of enquiry; its subject matter includes our capacity for phenomenological understanding. Like grief, phenomenological thought involves an engagement with possibilities. It incorporates what it seeks to explicate: style and how it is affected by other styles, something that encompasses linguistic thought (including that of the phenomenologist), just as it does world experience.

So, it would be a mistake to construe Merleau-Ponty's distinction between language and speech as a straightforward contrast between good and bad forms of linguistic thought and their expression, even if attention is limited to philosophical thought. "Language," in the relevant sense of the term, is integral to having a world and is needed to think and speak at all. Speech involves its disturbance, which could not occur without there being something to disturb. Speech thus has a role to play in arriving at a phenomenological account of grief; it exposes the contingency of what is more usually taken for granted. Nevertheless, this is consistent with the further inclusion of arguments that are played out within the bounds of established language, and also with drawing on insights from other disciplines. Distinctively *phenomenological* thought need not proceed in isolation; it does not have to be purified. Considered in isolation, it is not something that could ever culminate in a singular, inflexible account of human experience, however intricate that account might be. That is because the distinctiveness of

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a phenomenological perspective or stance depends on its continuing openness to possibilities. Only this can prevent us from forgetting a world that established bodies of knowledge presuppose. Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty (1964a, 110), philosophy of this kind is "not a particular body of knowledge; it is the vigilance which does not let us forget the source of all knowledge." Essential to a broadly phenomenological perspective is sustained insight into what is more usually overlooked, which requires a continuing disruption of the familiar. This type of thought is something that Merleau-Ponty both describes and—at the same time—enacts via his own distinctive style; it involves disrupting, evoking, and pointing to new possibilities, while at the same time working within established thinking.[3]

Over the course of his career, Merleau-Ponty increasingly came to regard the boundaries between phenomenological philosophy, art, and literature as blurred. All involve forms of expression that somehow disrupt entrenched patterns, revealing their contingency and opening up new possibilities. For instance, he writes of how certain kinds of "critical thought" fail to capture the "inexhaustible signification with which the novel is invested when it manages to throw our *image* of the world out of focus" (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 91). Something similar applies to various kinds of artworks, which "arouse more thoughts" than are "contained" within them (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 199).[4] Hence, although phenomenological enquiry relies on language and is embedded within a distinctively *philosophical* tradition, at its core is an engagement with possibilities that is common to various different media, including linguistic and nonlinguistic forms of expression. A phenomenological approach to philosophy is therefore an amalgam of sorts: a distinctive form of intellectual enquiry, which involves a type of disruptive engagement with possibilities that is not unique to it.

If this is how we are to think of phenomenological thought, then its structure is much like that of grief, in ways that are mutually illuminating. We might say that grief resembles an involuntary phenomenological reduction, one that involves an extended temporal process. Granted, we are forced into this without philosophical insight or prior training and left disorientated and bewildered. Even so, a common theme is the revelation of an indeterminacy that lurks beneath the world of everyday experience and is seldom explicitly recognized or acknowledged.[5] As the philosopher Susan Dunston (2010, 166) writes, reflecting on her own experience of grief, we are "immersed in a fluid world that fixed, representative, and codified facts scarcely touch."

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The kinds of phenomenological insights sought by Merleau-Ponty could be obtained in various ways, all of which involve somehow making explicit what is more usually taken as given. Hence, engaging with one's own and others' experiences of grief can be integral to phenomenological method. The difference between the two is attributable to a combination of reflective attentiveness and philosophical training, more so than their respective revelatory capacities. In both cases, there is a balance between being able to contemplate the structure of experience and letting go of so much that the ability to do so is compromised. In reflecting on the indeterminacy and meaning-loss experienced in profound grief, we identify a point beyond which phenomenological thought can proceed no further. This is not a cessation or conclusion of phenomenology, but a boundary. We can continue to work within that boundary and, indeed, right up against it, enriching, refining, and diversifying the subject matter with which we engage. Experiences of revelation and limitation are thus common to grief and phenomenological thought, in ways that render phenomenology consistent with its subject matter.

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Appendix: Details of Phenomenological Survey

Throughout this book, I have drawn on responses to a phenomenological survey of grief experiences, which I conducted with colleagues as part of the project "Grief: A Study of Human Emotional Experience," funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. The study received ethical approval from the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee at the University of York. It was made available via the online platform Qualtrix from 1 June 2020 until 4 February 2021. Anyone over the age of eighteen who identified as currently experiencing grief over the death of a person, or as having experienced grief in the past, was invited to complete it. All participants consented to their anonymized testimonies being made publicly available in full. Participants were able to access the survey after reading an information sheet and completing a consent form. Initial questions requested basic information such as age, gender, and nationality. Participants then proceeded to answer present- or past-tense versions of the questionnaire, depending on whether or not they identified their grief as "current." Present-tense versions of the questions were as follows:

- What was the nature of your relationship with the person who died?
- Please can you tell us about the circumstances of the bereavement, including when it occurred.
- How has the person's death affected you during the hours, days, and weeks that followed?
- How, if at all, have your relationships with other people (particular individuals and other people in general) been affected by the bereavement?
- Does the surrounding world seem any different to you while grieving? If so, how?

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- Has your experience of time changed in any way?
- Has your body felt any different during grief?
- Has grief interfered in any way with your ability and motivation to perform various tasks, including paid work?
- Is your experience of grief changing over time? If so, how?
- Have you ever found yourself looking for the person who died or expecting that person to appear?
- Are there times, places, and occasions that have made you especially aware of the person's absence?
- People who are grieving often report experiencing the presence of the person who died. Have you had any experiences that you would describe in those terms?
- Do you still feel a sense of connection with the person? If so, could you say something about when you feel this and what the experience is like.
- Since the person died, is there anything that you have been doing in order to feel close to them?
- Is there anything that you do in order to avoid being reminded of the person or of their death?
- Has anything in particular helped you to cope with grief? Has anything made you feel better or worse?
- How understanding have other people been? Have others said or done anything that you've found especially helpful or unhelpful?
- How, if at all, has your experience of bereavement changed you as a person?
- How, if at all, does grief over the death of a person differ from other forms of loss that you have experienced?
- Are there any aspects of grief that you find particularly puzzling or difficult to put into words?
- Are there any important aspects of your experience that we have not addressed?

The survey was disseminated widely via social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook. Many of the responses were received shortly after the charity Cruse Bereavement Care posted a link via Twitter. A total of 265 completed responses were received. Of these, 236 focused on grief over the death of a person, with a majority (130) involving the death of a long-term

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partner. Despite the study's explicit focus on bereavement, the remaining 29 responses were concerned principally with grief over childlessness rather than bereavement. Most respondents were UK nationals. This was to be expected, given where and how the study was advertised. Other nationalities listed were United States/American (13), Dutch (4), German (4), Irish (2), Australian (2), Swedish (1), New Zealand (1), Polish (1), and Ghanaian (1). In total, 240 respondents identified as female and only 25 as male. All participants identified as either female or male; none chose to self-describe. A total of 173 participants reported an ongoing experience of grief, while 92 reported a past experience. Quotations from 101 of the responses are included in this book, integrated into chapters 1–8. The following table includes, for those respondents, information concerning (1) current age of the bereaved, (2) gender of the bereaved, (3) whether or not the experience of grief was identified as current or past, and (4) the person who died or the nature of the loss:

Questionnaire	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
8	18–24	F	Current	Brother
11	55–64	F	Current	Father
13	55–64	F	Current	Husband
14	35–44	F	Current	Husband
17	45–54	F	Current	Husband
18	35–44	M	Current	Wife
19	35–44	F	Past	Fiancé
20	55–64	F	Current	Adult son
21	35–44	F	Current	Husband
25	55–64	F	Current	Husband
28	65–74	F	Current	Husband
30	65–74	F	Current	Husband
31	45–54	F	Current	Husband
34	55–64	F	Past	Husband
35	65–74	F	Current	Husband
36	55–64	F	Current	Husband
38	55–64	F	Current	Husband
40	55–64	M	Current	Wife

(*continued*)

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Questionnaire	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
41	65–74	F	Current	Husband
42	55–64	M	Current	Wife
44	55–64	F	Current	Husband
45	55–64	F	Current	Husband
46	55–64	F	Current	Husband
47	65–74	F	Current	Husband
48	55–64	M	Past	Wife
49	55–64	F	Current	Husband
51	55–64	F	Current	Husband
54	55–64	F	Current	Fiancé
55	55–64	F	Current	Husband
57	65–74	F	Past	Husband
59	65–74	F	Current	Husband
62	55–64	F	Current	Husband
65	65–74	F	Current	Husband
66	65–74	F	Current	Husband
67	65–74	F	Past	Husband
69	65–74	F	Past	Husband(s)
71	55–64	F	Current	Husband
72	65–74	F	Current	Husband
74	55–64	F	Current	Husband
75	55–64	F	Current	Husband
81	55–64	M	Current	Wife
82	55–64	F	Current	Husband
83	55–64	F	Past	Partner
85	55–64	F	Current	Husband
86	65–74	F	Current	Wife
87	45–54	F	Current	Husband
89	55–64	F	Current	Husband
93	65–74	M	Current	Wife
94	55–64	F	Current	Husband
97	45–54	F	Current	Husband
100	55–64	F	Current	Husband
101	75+	M	Current	Wife
102	55–64	F	Current	Husband

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Questionnaire	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
104	55–64	F	Current	Husband
107	65–74	F	Current	Husband
108	45–54	F	Current	Partner
110	25–34	F	Current	Father
113	55–64	F	Current	Husband
114	45–54	F	Current	Spouse
118	65–74	F	Current	Husband
123	55–64	F	Current	Husband
125	18–24	F	Current	Father
126	45–54	F	Current	Husband
127	65–74	F	Current	Husband
133	55–64	F	Current	Partner
141	45–54	F	Past	Sister
144	65–74	F	Past	Mother
151	25–34	F	Current	Husband
159	35–44	F	Current	Father
162	35–44	F	Current	Grandmother
164	45–54	F	Current	Close friend
168	35–44	F	Current	Aunt
171	45–54	M	Past	Partner and only child
172	65–74	F	Current	Husband
174	65–74	F	Past	Husband
175	55–64	F	Current	Husband
177	55–64	M	Current	Wife
178	45–54	F	Current	Husband
180	55–64	F	Current	Husband
189	25–34	F	Current	Grandmother
191	25–34	F	Current	Mother
192	65–74	F	Current	Husband
194	35–44	M	Current	Mother
196	35–44	F	Current	Childlessness
198	45–54	F	Past	Miscarriage and childlessness
204	18–24	F	Current	Grandfather
209	55–64	F	Current	Childlessness

(*continued*)

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Questionnaire	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
210	45–54	F	Current	Childlessness
215	55–64	F	Current	Father
221	45–54	F	Current	Childlessness
223	45–54	F	Past	Childlessness
225	35–44	F	Current	Childlessness
226	35–44	F	Current	Childlessness
233	35–44	F	Past	Childlessness
238	55–64	F	Past	Childlessness
239	45–54	F	Current	Husband
251	45–54	F	Current	Childlessness
253	55–64	F	Current	Childlessness
258	45–54	F	Current	Childlessness
261	45–54	F	Current	Miscarriage and childlessness
262	25–34	F	Current	Childlessness

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Notes

Chapter 1

1. The sample was limited in several ways. Most participants were UK citizens, whose experiences of grief and ways of interpreting and expressing those experiences are likely to reflect a certain cultural context. Many of them were made aware of the study by the charity Cruse Bereavement Care. So, forms of grief that might lead one to seek such support are likely to be overrepresented. Ninety-one percent of respondents self-identified as female, and the most frequently reported bereavement was the loss of a partner. The study was undertaken between 2020 and 2021, during a time when social restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic may have led to some respondents having atypical grief experiences.

2. For a different use of the term "mourning," see Rosenfeld (2020), who takes mourning to be a form of emotional experience that follows the experience of grief. Another use is adopted by Bowlby (1980/1998, 18), who identifies mourning with what I call "grief" or "grieving" while reserving the term "grieving" for moments of conscious distress. What I call "mourning," he calls "mourning customs."

3. However, other uses of the term "grief" pick up on quite different phenomena. For example, remarks such as "he gave me real grief for doing that" and "you wouldn't believe the grief I went through to get here" do not relate to the kinds of experiences I am concerned with.

4. I also limit my consideration of "grief" to *human* experiences of loss. I do not deny that there are ways in which some nonhuman animals might also be said to grieve (for a detailed discussion of grief in nonhuman animals, see King 2013). However, I emphasize aspects of grief that are most likely specific to the human case, given that they depend on our social nature and temporally extended life structure.

5. An earlier model, proposed by Bowlby (1980/1998, 85), identifies four stages: (1) numbness, punctuated by anger or distress; (2) yearning and searching; (3) despair and disorganization; and (4) reorganization. Like Kübler-Ross and Kessler, he does

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not think of these stages as a strict sequence and acknowledges that people "oscillate" back and forth between them.

6. Hence, excluded from such an analysis are moods that endure without changing much over time, along with enduring emotional attitudes such as love and hate. What I have elsewhere called "existential feelings" (consisting of a changeable sense of reality and of belonging to the world) are *presupposed* by the relevant dynamic but can also be altered by it (Ratcliffe 2008, 2015). I will return to this point in chapter 8.

7. For instance, Deonna and Teroni (2012, 4–5) begin their introductory text on emotions by offering examples such as "Ben is afraid of this lion," "Arthur hopes that the weather will hold up," "Ben regrets not having gone to the party," "Rosetta is embarrassed by her behavior," and "Jane is sad because England lost to Germany."

8. It is important not to overgeneralize here. The loss of interpersonal regulators is not exclusive to bereavement. For instance, it can also occur with the breakdown of a relationship or when one has moved to a new place. Furthermore, not all experiences of grief concern those upon whom we depend significantly for self-regulation.

Chapter 2

1. A concern raised by Goldie (2000, 4) is similar in spirit. He observes how, in seeking to account for the intentionality of emotion, philosophers fail to accommodate feeling. Yet it is clear that feelings are essential to emotion. So, they are "added on" as an afterthought. But this then fails to account for how feeling is *integrated* into emotion.

2. Many contributors to the literature on grief and bereavement either explicitly state or assume that grief is a process. For example, Colin Murray Parkes, whose work has been highly influential, maintains that grief is not a "set of symptoms" but a "succession of clinical pictures which blend into and replace one another," together comprising a "distinct psychological process" (Parkes 1998, 7).

3. Types of emotions can be distinguished from one another by their formal objects. For instance, while the formal object of grief is loss, the formal object of fear is threat. For further discussion of emotions and their formal objects, see, for example, de Sousa (1987, chap. 5) and Teroni (2007).

4. See also Helm (2001) for discussion of holism. Others similarly endorse the view that emotional values are holistic. For instance, Solomon (1976/1993) suggests that emotions involve not simply evaluative judgments but systems of judgments. de Sousa (2002) likewise endorses what he calls "axiological holism."

5. The dynamic quality of emotions is also emphasized by Solomon. An emotion, he says, is not simply a judgment or system of judgments; it is a "purposive attempt to structure our world" (1976/1993, xviii). Later, he writes that emotions are

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"engagements with the world," which are not evaluative presentations of concrete objects but ways of being "entangled" in the world (Solomon 2004a). See also Slaby and Wüschner (2014) for an emphasis on emotions as extended engagements with our surroundings.

6. I use the term "object" here to mean the "concrete object of an emotional experience," what the emotion is directed at. The term thus encompasses entities, events, and situations—past, present, and anticipated.

7. Solomon (1976/1993) also considers the relevant aspect of experience. However, he does not draw a clear distinction between the evaluation of something, the background to that evaluation, and the way in which the two interact, sometimes referring to all of them as "emotions" and as "judgments" or "systems of judgments."

8. We can relate this to a distinction drawn by Gordon between "factive" and "epistemic" emotions (Gordon 1987, 26). The former arise when one knows *p* to be the case (as with joy and guilt), while the latter arise when one does not yet know whether *p* is the case (as with hope and fear). Phenomenologically speaking, the distinction between epistemic and factive emotions is not clear-cut. Emotional responses to events that have occurred implicate other possible events in all sorts of ways, and emotional anticipation of something often involves a change in one's relationship with an actual situation.

9. In a complementary way, Valentine (2008, 93) observes that "our sense of self is dependent on our relationships with others, so that when a loved one dies, a sense of who we are as a person is under threat." See also Cholbi (2019) for the view that grief both affects and reveals something about one's practical identity. Varga and Gallagher (2020) also relate grief to practical identity, in considering a form of grief that involves concern over how our own deaths will affect those with whom our practical identities are entwined.

10. For current purposes, I use the terms "significance" and "mattering" interchangeably.

11. Price (2010, 31) comes close to acknowledging this, in suggesting that "habits" and "emotions" have yet to catch up with a current situation. However, if habits involve activities that we engage in against the backdrop of a pregiven experiential world, then grief impacts upon something more fundamental than habit. And, if habit is integral to the constitution of an experiential world, then it encompasses more than Price indicates.

12. The difference between propositional acceptance of something and its integration into one's life is also discussed by Furtak (2018, 78–79), who refers to the "cognitive inadequacy of unemotional reason" and how grief can involve accepting something intellectually without being "fully aware of what it means."

13. Attig (2011, 33) states that a *grieving* process is not itself an emotion and should be distinguished from emotional experiences of grief that "come over us." However,

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I reject this terminological choice. Better, I suggest, to construe the emotion of grief as temporally extended and as involving a blend of activity and passivity. This is compatible with acknowledging that there are also shorter-term emotional experiences that stand out as conspicuous and distressing aspects of it.

14. This is not to endorse the more specific view that a grief process ordinarily requires "grief work," which involves explicitly confronting and effortfully, reflectively working through what has happened. See Stroebe and Schut (1999) for a critique of the grief work hypothesis and an alternative conception of how grief facilitates acknowledgment and adjustment.

15. Goldie (2012, 62) adds that grief is also "experienced as a process." Consistent with this, C. S. Lewis (1961/1966, p. 50) writes, "I thought I could describe a *state*, make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process."

16. The point applies equally to the beginnings of many grief experiences. We often know that someone we love is dying and may also witness a decline in their health and abilities. The sense of actual and anticipated loss that this involves is sometimes referred to as "anticipatory grief" or "anticipatory mourning" (see, e.g., Sweeting and Gilhooly 1990; Doka 2002).

17. In thinking through the issue of how grief involves narrative disruption rather than a cohesive narrative shape, I am grateful to Luke Brunning for helpful correspondence and an insightful critique of Goldie's narrative approach (Brunning unpublished).

18. For instance, Higgins (2013, 172) observes that "those who grieve make use of stories, which seem to assist the efforts to reorganize their lives." Gilbert (2002, 223) likewise remarks, "The need to create stories to make order of disorder and find meaning in the meaningless is particularly relevant to the study of grief."

19. We grieve for those we love. So, a further question to explore is whether the same points apply equally to the duration of love. It is arguable that they do not, at least not in all instances. If that is right, then the asymmetry is a potentially interesting one. I am thinking more specifically of romantic love here. Stories of people falling out of love swiftly and announcing all of a sudden that "I don't love you anymore" are not uncommon. In addition, it is arguable that one can start to fall in love, only for the process to stop after a fairly short time. A narrative along these lines is easy to construct. For example, an interpersonal process might begin during the first few dates but end abruptly as one party picks his nose and belches loudly while professing a fondness for serial killers.

20. According to Michael Cholbi (2019), another factor that shapes the course of grief is the pursuit of self-knowledge, conceived of as knowledge of the values that constitute one's practical identity. However, practical identity is something that can change significantly during the course of profound grief. So, what is most important—gaining

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knowledge of a past identity, a current identity, what is common to the two, or what has changed? Alternatively, perhaps what matters most is not knowledge of one's own identity but insight into the *nature* of practical identity, including its fragility and the importance of interpersonal relations. Whichever the case, the nature of this "knowledge" requires clarification. For instance, does it consist, for the most part, of explicit, articulable propositions? Alternatively, is it largely prereflective and inarticulate, manifested in changed attitudes toward other people and life in general? Setting aside the specifics, I am doubtful that an emphasis on self-knowledge adds much to our understanding of grief's trajectory. Reconciling an experiential world or "practical identity" with the reality of the death already *requires* a process of the kind described here. What Attig (2011) calls "relearning the world" is unavoidable, at least if a loss is ultimately to be integrated into one's life. Self-knowledge of whatever kind can contribute to this process, as can much else. But any further opportunities that may arise for gaining self-knowledge are incidental. Nevertheless, as I will suggest in chapter 9, experiences of grief can indeed be sources of insight, even involving a *sense* or *feeling* of revelation, of glimpsing something that is more usually hidden.

Chapter 3

1. Several other philosophers have developed largely complementary positions (e.g., Stocker and Hegeman 1996; Goldie 2002; Döring 2007; Slaby 2008; Helm 2009a; Colombetti 2014; Deonna and Teroni 2015; Furtak 2018).

2. Deonna and Teroni (2015) appeal to "action-readiness" in order to account for the role of feeling. They suggest that different types of emotions involve different evaluative attitudes, each consisting in a distinctive set of diffuse, bodily dispositions. As these dispositions are phenomenologically accessible to some degree, evaluative attitudes are inseparable from what could just as well be termed *bodily feelings*. See also Frijda (2007/2013) for an emphasis on action-readiness.

3. Scarantino (2010) therefore objects to what he calls the "elastic strategy": we stretch "judgment" as much as we have to, so that it fits around emotion. When stretched that far, it also encompasses the "feelings" that others contrast with "judgments."

4. See, for instance, Deonna (2006), Döring (2007), and Tappolet (2016) for attempts to construe emotion in perceptual terms.

5. Slaby and Wüschner (2014, 212–213) similarly seek to capture insights common to both feeling and judgment theories. Emotions, they suggest, are "acted-out engagements with the world," rather than mere *reactions* to situations. To register something emotionally is to be drawn into a situation, and it is through these emotional "engagements" that we experience value. Emotions are not isolated judgments or synchronic, discrete feelings but "temporally extended episodes involving a person's entire comportment in and toward the world."

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6. See also Furtak (2018, chap. 4) for discussion of grief and "sinking in."

7. Slaby (2017) also suggests that affective experience can point beyond what is experienced at a particular time.

8. For further discussion of felt anticipation and degrees of determinacy, see Ratcliffe (2017, chap. 4).

9. Elsewhere, I have developed a different conception of affective depth, one that applies not to emotional episodes and processes but to what I call "existential feelings" (Ratcliffe 2015, chap. 5).

10. Pugmire (2005, 50) also identifies another type of case, where an emotion is experienced as irrevocably inadequate to its object, as in some religious experiences. In the case of grief, there may not be a sense of *irrevocable* inadequacy. Even so, one's initial emotional response, in pointing toward what is to come, can incorporate a sense of its own failure to accommodate the gravity of what has happened.

11. Some types of emotion are always deep (or, at least, ordinarily deep), as with grief, while some token emotions are deeper than others belonging to the same type, as with the difference between being angry at someone who pushes clumsily past you on the street and being angry with someone who has just run over your dog for fun.

12. Prinz (2004) also suggests that an emotion can "represent" something without embodying the full content of what it represents, although our approaches differ in other respects.

13. Fuchs (2018) emphasizes the role of temporal desynchronization in such experiences.

14. The sense of having lost a part of oneself or undergone an amputation may be most frequent or most pronounced among bereaved parents. As Klass (1999, 29) writes, "When a child dies, the parent experiences an irreparable loss, because the child is an extension of the parent's self." A tendency to experience and think of one's child as an extension of oneself can be understood, at least partly, in terms of how an experiential world or life structure is organized. To a large extent, the parent's values and projects are directed toward furthering the life of the child: my possibilities are oriented toward the sustenance and development of your possibilities, which I take to extend into the future beyond my own.

15. For detailed discussion of the image/schema distinction, in Merleau-Ponty and elsewhere, see Gallagher (2005).

16. See https://www.alexawright.com/after-image (accessed 5 October 2021).

17. This is consistent with the finding that tactual stimulation of another body part often generates sensations in the phantom. Rapid onset of phantoms indicates that this process does not, or at least need not, involve neuroanatomical changes.

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Rather, patterns of synaptic activity that were previously eclipsed by input from the missing limb become more salient; they are "unmasked" by its loss (Ramachandran and Hirstein 1998, 1614). However, Ramachandran and Hirstein concede that this explanation is only partial and cannot accommodate every aspect of phantom limb experiences. For instance, it does not account for experiences of voluntary and involuntary movement. For discussion of phantom limbs and cortical remapping, see also Ramachandran and Rogers-Ramachandran (2000).

18. For different approaches to we-intentionality, see, for example, Krueger (2013), Schmid (2014), and Pacherie (2014).

19. The profound effect that interpersonal loss can have on one's world is consistent with a wider emphasis in the phenomenological tradition on how the world of everyday experience depends on intersubjectivity or intercorporeality. However, it is important to distinguish ways in which particular individuals can shape world experience from the roles played by other people in general or by a generic other. For a helpful recent discussion of intercorporeality in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, see Moran (2017).

20. Valentine (2008, 126) thus remarks on how narratives of grief point to the conclusion that "self-identity, personhood and agency" are "relational and intersubjective," in ways that conflict with predominant emphases in certain cultures on "separateness, independence and control."

21. Køster (2021b) offers an interesting phenomenological account of "feelings of emptiness" in grief, which complements this analysis. He suggests that the sense of self comes to depend on "intercorporeal integration with intimate others" and is therefore experienced as bereft of something in the event of their loss (Køster 2021b, 133).

22. In contrast, Moller (2007) argues for the view that even a long-term partner can, at some level of description, be functionally replaced and that resilience in the face of loss is sometimes to be understood in this way. I will discuss this position further in chapter 6.

23. Radden (forthcoming) argues that, although the pain of grief differs significantly from paradigmatic experiences of localized pain resulting from clearly defined bodily injury, it is much closer to certain experiences of chronic pain.

24. It has been suggested that the prevalence of phantom pain is historically variably, due in part to culturally changing interpretations of phantom limbs by the medical profession and, consequently, by patients as well. It seems that, as pleasant phantoms have become rarer, painful phantoms have increased in frequency (Crawford 2014).

25. See Wilkinson (2000) for a more specific comparison between grief and a burn. See also Solomon (2021) for a discussion of grief as injury.

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26. A potentially interesting difference between the pain of grief and the experience of bodily injury is that people tend to be unambiguously motivated to avoid the latter. As Cholbi (2017b) observes, grief's pain is not merely tolerated; we are even "drawn to it." This, he suggests, is due to our recognition that grief, although painful, can yield valuable self-knowledge. However, we could instead maintain that it is not the painful experience of loss that is valued positively, but the person who died and the relationship with that person. Hence, there need be no more conflict here than in any other scenario where (a) we are pained by *p* but evaluate *q* positively, and (b) contemplation of *q* involves contemplation of *p* and vice versa. Furthermore, it is not clear why we need to appeal to the pursuit of self-knowledge in order to explain why those who grieve are sometimes *drawn toward* what is painful. The need to engage in a process of comprehension and adjustment already suffices to account for this, the alternative being retention of an impossible world. In contrast to Cholbi, Atkins (2021) suggests that grief's "sweet sorrow" is a form of self-pity, which involves redirecting concern away from the deceased and toward oneself, thereby finding temporary relief from the task of confronting loss. The term "sweet sorrow" originates in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where Juliet says to Romeo the words "parting is such sweet sorrow." Here, the sorrow is "sweet," partly due to the prospect of being reunited the following day. It also makes salient to Juliet the love she feels for Romeo. The latter applies equally to the case of grief. In chapter 6, I will discuss how grief often involves revising and sustaining, rather than abandoning, a relationship with the deceased. There is thus a positive aspect to engaging with the painfulness of loss: it contributes to sustaining a relationship that involves continuing love. This is entirely different from self-pity. I have no doubt that some of those who grieve indulge in self-pity as a way of finding relief from the pain of loss, and that some seek self-knowledge in ways that are painful. However, neither self-pity nor self-knowledge are required in order to account for our being drawn toward something painful. The combination of continuing to value a relationship, needing to comprehend and adjust to loss, and striving to sustain some form of relationship suffices for that. Furthermore, none of this gives us reason to think of the *painfulness of loss itself* as anything other than unequivocally, deeply unpleasant.

Chapter 4

1. See also Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012, 372) for the claim that emotions are "variations of being in the world" that are inseparable from their bodily expressions.

2. I am not sure which of Husserl's writings Merleau-Ponty is referring to here. However, the theme in question is most fully developed in Husserl's Passive Synthesis Lectures (Husserl 2001) and in *Experience and Judgment* (Husserl 1948/1973). Merleau-Ponty may have seen the latter.

3. For a more detailed discussion of this theme in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, see Ratcliffe (2015, 2017).

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4. In other writings, I refer to changes in the overall form of experience as "existential feelings," which I take to consist in a felt sense of the *kinds* of possibilities that are available to ourselves and others (Ratcliffe 2008, 2015). One question that arises is how episodic emotions might bring about changes in existential feeling. How could experiences with circumscribed contents lead to all-enveloping changes in the structure of experience? What I have described here is one way in which that happens. Numerous localized phenomenological disruptions add up to a change in the overall form of experience, its style of temporal unfolding. Nothing seems homely or certain anymore; the world as a whole no longer offers certain kinds of possibilities.

5. Elsewhere, I have suggested that this overarching "style" of prereflective anticipation is one of the things that Wittgenstein is concerned with in the notes posthumously published as *On Certainty* (Wittgenstein 1969; Ratcliffe 2017, chap. 6).

6. Ami Harbin (2016, 2) refers to such experiences as "disorientations." These, she writes, are "temporally extended, major life experiences that make it difficult for individuals to know how to go on. They often involve feeling deeply out of place, unfamiliar, or not at home."

7. See also Ingerslev (2018) for a discussion of how grief can involve a loss of experienced meaning, including linguistic meaning, and how this relates to the loss of a life structure that was shared with the deceased.

8. For instance, Kirmayer (2007) suggests that traumatized refugees are faced with something structurally similar, when negotiating a gulf between "disparate worlds" and attempting to convey it to others.

9. See Ratcliffe (2021) for further discussion of Merleau-Ponty on linguistic experience and possibility. See also Kee (2020) for an account of the horizonal structure of linguistic experience. Kee suggests that the experience of spoken words is comparable to that of using a tool: "As a first approximation, the horizons of an object, tool, or (as I shall argue) a word are the networks of typical habitual associations that inform our perception of and interaction with that object, tool, or word and prefigure further continuations of experience with it" (906).

10. For an account of how Merleau-Ponty interprets and draws upon Saussure, see Andén (2018). For a wider-ranging discussion of Merleau-Ponty on language, see Edie (1976).

11. There is more to be said about what, exactly, these possibilities attach to and how they should be integrated into a broader account of linguistic meaning. They do not depend on some quality of perceived speech, given that they also feature in our experiences of written texts. Hearing and reading a word are analogous to encountering the same entity via sight and touch. As Edie (1976, 88) observes, drawing on passages from *Phenomenology of Perception*, "words carry, beneath their conceptual meanings and forms, an 'immanent' 'existential meaning,' a 'value of

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use,' an 'affective value,' which is not merely *rendered* by them but which '*inhabits* them.'" This is what I have suggested we should think of in terms of a horizonal structure integral to experiences of written and spoken words. There is a great deal more to be said regarding the *kinds* of possibilities involved in our experiences of written and spoken language (what they are possibilities *of*) and how these possibilities relate to, influence, and are influenced by our wider experiences of the world.

12. The term "maximum grip" is often employed to refer to Merleau-Ponty's conception of how we prereflectively position ourselves to achieve an optimal vantage point for perceiving something (Dreyfus 2002; Merleau-Ponty 1945/2012, part II, chap. 3). We could similarly speak of "linguistic maximum grip," a dynamic, progressive way of orienting ourselves toward another person's words, such that we are better placed to resolve a holistic, idiosyncratic system of possibilities.

13. In light of these considerations, we might reflect on the use of explicitly *poetic* language in grief. Neimeyer (1999, 81) offers the following remarks: "Literal language fails to capture the nuances of feeling and meaning that constitute our unique sense of loss. Poetic self-expression presses back the boundaries of public speech, articulating symbolically what cannot be stated plainly." Relating language to the horizonal structure of experience and its disruption serves to illuminate at least some of the forms this "pressing back" can take.

14. Colombetti (2009, 17) similarly suggests that the expression of emotional feelings, including their verbal expression, sometimes lends precision to them. Naming emotions, for instance, "squeezes complex feelings into something compact." This can be thought of in terms of the linguistic completion of emotion, rather than the expression of a preformed experience. One way in which language can add determinacy to an experience is by resolving its content—what an emotional feeling is about. In addition, it can contribute to the sense of which *kind* of emotion one is experiencing. See also Ratcliffe (2017) for the view that language contributes to emotional experience in these ways.

15. More recently, Noë (2012, 27–28) has endorsed a similar view, according to which thought can be a "kind of extended perception," involving a grasp of what one would have to do in order to access the relevant entity. He adds that, although this does not apply universally, "all thought is directed to its object thanks to the thinker's skillful access to the object."

16. See also Brinkmann (2020, 30–31) for the view that human grief is distinctive in virtue of how we relate to time.

17. Fuchs (2018, 50) also discusses a form of temporal desynchronization that originates, not in loss of life structure, but in a conflict between the "ongoing reality of everyday life" and the "persisting presence of the loved one."

18. Ronald de Sousa (1987, chap. 7) has suggested that emotions solve the "Frame Problem," construed as the problem of securing relevance so that our thoughts have

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the right material to work with. If that is so, then solving the problem is an ongoing task. Even everyday situations involve subtle perturbations of the significant world within which we think and act. It is never wholly determinate, even during times of relative stability.

19. Burley (2015, 156) thus suggests that we should be wary of the "tendency to take a phenomenon that goes very deep in our lives and to discuss it in ways that turn it into a logical conundrum."

20. See also Markovic (2021) for a discussion of involuntary transformative experience. Markovic rightly suggests that the emphasis, in the case of grief and other involuntary transformative experiences, should be placed on the transformation process itself, rather than the contrast between pre- and post-transformation states of affairs.

21. Harbin (2016) offers a complementary critique of certain ethical approaches for failing to address how ethical life is to proceed in the context of what she calls "disorientation."

Chapter 5

1. Brinkmann (2020, chap. 3) suggests that certain phenomenological approaches to grief (including mine) are too pragmatic in emphasis and neglect the ways in which grief involves the personal and the particular. Here and in the remaining chapters, I dispense with such concerns by addressing the specifically *interpersonal* aspects of grief and how they relate to practical disruptions. See Ratcliffe (2015, 2017) for wider-ranging discussion of the phenomenological centrality of interpersonal experience and relatedness. See also Ratcliffe (2020a) for a consideration of the interpersonal phenomenology of grief.

2. Sabucedo, Evans, and Hayes (2020) provide a detailed and wide-ranging overview of research on the relationships between bereavement hallucinations and culture.

3. See Kamp et al. (2020) for a survey of literature on perceptual and perception-like experiences of the deceased, which considers different methodological and disciplinary perspectives.

4. For instance, Daggett (2005) focuses on experiences of communication rather than mere presence, where communication can include perception-like experiences but is also wider-ranging.

5. This distinction is also applicable to other phenomena labeled as "hallucination." For instance, it is arguable that auditory verbal hallucinations, in psychiatric contexts and more widely, fall into two broad categories: those involving certain auditory qualities and those involving a less determinate sense of receiving a communication from elsewhere (Ratcliffe 2017).

6. There is a further distinction between experiencing a *personal* style and experiencing a more general style that is indicative of an *animate* being. Although this

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distinction is not drawn clearly by Merleau-Ponty, I suggest that the difference is attributable to a certain way of being *affected* that is typical of the interpersonal.

7. There are also complementary themes in the writings of Levinas. See Brinkmann (2020, 71), whose discussion of grief draws on Levinas in order to emphasize the importance of acknowledging the "*otherness of the other*."

8. I have referred both to experiencing *possibilities* and to being *affected*. As discussed in chapter 3, I take the two to be inextricable; it is through the feeling body that we experience various kinds of possibilities, including relational possibilities involving other people. The emotional qualities of an interpersonal experience thus reflect the kinds of possibilities that are most salient (Ratcliffe 2015, 2017). During patterned interactions between people, feelings and associated possibilities unfold in structured ways. Adopting a complementary approach, Køster (2021a) draws on work by Fuchs (e.g., 2017, 2018) to suggest that our sense of the presence of a particular person involves a distinctive bodily "resonance" to that person's "style," a felt sense of the person. While Køster emphasizes complex multisensory experiences, I propose that such experiences can also arise without sensory experiences of the person in one or more externally directed sensory modalities. There remains a distinctive *way of being affected*, even though many of the possibilities associated with real-time interaction, such as possibilities for affecting that person, may be lacking.

9. This view of how our possibilities depend on those of others complements the position set out by Beauvoir (1947/2018), according to which human freedom is to be conceived of in terms of a future that remains indeterminate in significant ways, where this indeterminacy is only sustainable if one recognizes and is committed to the freedom of others upon whom it depends.

10. This sense of connection can also be fragile, incomplete, and—at times—unsustainable. It is consistent with intermittent or constant feelings of loss and absence (a point that applies equally to episodic experiences of presence and to less pronounced, longer-term experiences of being affected). Hence, what I have identified here remains compatible with the final sentence of Sartre's memorial essay: "There is nothing to be concluded from this except that this long friendship, neither done nor undone, obliterated when it was about to be reborn, or broken, remains inside me, an ever-open wound" (1998, 624).

11. An experience of this nature may well be what is referred to here: "I have felt his presence intensely on a few occasions at night in our room. I can feel a physical sensation in my body that is unexplainable" (#17).

12. In a commentary on Lewis's text, Rowan Williams offers the following insightful remark: "The implication is also that God *cannot but* continuously shatter your images of him. And given what has been said about how it is only the living being that overturns our projections, that maintains the tang of otherness, it is the shifting, painfully expanding character of our thought about God that best shows what

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it means to call him 'living.' If our experience is littered with broken images of God—and deep pain and grief will certainly do this—then we are left either with no believable God at all or with a God whose otherness becomes daily more resistant and powerful; and alive" (Lewis 2015, 86–87).

13. It could well be that various other phenomena commonly labeled as "hallucinations" do not conform to orthodox definitions either. For instance, a hallucination of a drinking glass might be construed as a sensory experience that is similar or identical in content to that of perceiving a drinking glass. However, what may be lacking from such an experience is a sense of the associated possibilities—of touching it, picking it up, drinking from it. Without that, there is a diminished sense of presence. Alternatively, a hallucination might involve experiencing the kinds of possibilities associated with being in the presence of a drinking glass but without the associated sensory contents. It is arguable that experiences of both types occur, that they are different in kind, and that they are both categorized together as "hallucinations" due to lack of phenomenological sensitivity (Ratcliffe 2017).

14. For instance, see Ratcliffe (2017, chap. 4) for a discussion of certain "hallucinations" that arise in psychiatric contexts and involve a distinctively personal sense of threat.

15. See also Barthes (1980/2000) for discussion of how a photograph can capture a person in a way that does not depend on an accurate likeness.

Chapter 6

1. Consistent with this, Steffen and Coyle (2011, 595) observe that there is sometimes a "simultaneous sense of intensely felt loss alongside the perceived continuation of a living relationship."

2. Dubose (1997, 373) also applies Merleau-Ponty's discussion of reversibility to the phenomenology of grief: "The chiasmic structure of self and other is drowned in the reversibility of *dis*-appearance. In numbness and shock, one's lived body has died *with* the lost loved one. A *reversibility occurs between the dis-appearance of the other and the dis-appearance of myself*."

3. See Ruin (2018) for an approach that explores how shared, cultural experience is structured in ways that involve our "being with" the dead as well as the living.

4. For further discussion of this issue, see also Boelen et al. (2006).

5. Root and Exline (2014) observe that empirical studies report conflicting findings and conclude that more work is needed in order to identify what the important dimensions of variation actually are.

6. For example, bereavement by suicide is often associated with feelings of guilt, rejection, anger, shame, and confusion (Young et al. 2012). These are likely to interfere

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with the development of bonds and also to influence the emotional qualities of bonds. For instance, it has been suggested the circumstances of the death can impede one's attempts to make sense of loss, in ways that are inseparable from how one relates to the deceased (Neimeyer, Baldwin, and Gillies 2006).

7. According to McCracken (2005, 145), the significance of biographical events remains open while someone is still alive, as that person retains the ability to act in ways that alter it. But, once the person has died, we can, as part of a grief process, look upon their life as a whole and assign a stable, enduring significance to events. I have argued that remembering the dead can also involve something importantly different: continuing to be affected by them, finding new forms of significance in the person's biography, and remaining open to new possibilities.

8. Elsewhere, however, I have offered a detailed critique of the view that belief-desire psychology is central to interpersonal understanding (Ratcliffe 2007).

9. One might object that Freud is in fact referring to "mourning" rather than "grief." However, this is an artifact of the English translation. The original German term, "Trauer," does not respect that distinction.

10. Price (2010, 30) uses different terms to make a similar point, suggesting that grief incorporates two distinct kinds of sadness: an initial "anguish" and an enduring "desolation."

11. Attig (2000) also emphasizes how continuing to love a person who has died requires coming to accept one's separation from them.

12. See Bonanno (2009) for discussion of the relevant findings. I will return to the notion of "resilience" in chapter 8.

13. Preston-Roedder and Preston-Roedder (2018) are also critical of Moller for assuming an overly narrow conception of what it is for someone to be of importance in one's life.

14. Cholbi does not regard grief itself as exclusively past-directed. Instead, he conceives of it as "the unfolding of an engagement with a relationship that has been lost or transformed" (Cholbi 2017a, 270). Nevertheless, the *object* of grief remains something that *has* happened—the loss of certain aspects of a relationship. Cholbi thus takes the rationality of grief to be "backward-looking," in a manner comparable to that of other emotions such as joy.

15. Most of the study participants who described grief over childlessness were members of the support network Gateway Women (https://gateway-women.com; last accessed 6 September 2021). The network founder, Jody Day, has also written a detailed account of her own grief over childlessness (Day 2016).

16. Mehmel (2021) also observes that grief is not simply a reflection of the extent to which one's life structure depended on a particular person, as it involves losing

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possibilities that are integral to one's sense of self and orientation toward the future. Such a loss does not require prior establishment of shared practices involving the deceased.

17. Jody Day (2016, 220) writes, "The shift in identity from being a woman who hopes, one day, to become a mother to one who knows, without question, that it's never going to happen is so huge that it throws *everything* into question."

18. For further discussion of non-bereavement losses, see the essays collected in Harris (2020).

19. This emphasis on actualizing one another's possibilities, in ways that are inextricable, complements an account of interpersonal love that Sara Heinämaa (2020) pieces together from some of Husserl's writings. According to Heinämaa's interpretation of Husserl, love relates to the dynamic, temporal structure of human subjectivity. Loving someone is not a matter of caring for a "stable," "fixed" thing. Rather, it involves "a connection between unique ways of becoming" (Heinämaa 2020, 432).

20. As de Sousa (1987, 123) observes, "There are as many formal objects as there are different emotion types." For discussion of emotions and their formal objects, see also Teroni (2007).

Chapter 7

1. Thompson (1994) points out that these different conceptions of emotion regulation are not always made explicit or distinguished from one another.

2. See also Mikulincer, Shaver, and Pereg (2003); Shaver and Mikulincer (2014); and Varga and Krueger (2013) for statements of the view that early attachment serves as a model for conceptualizing interpersonally distributed regulation processes that continue into adulthood.

3. Slaby (2014) suggests that social interaction sometimes facilitates *types* of emotional experience that would otherwise be inaccessible to a person.

4. Mikulincer, Shaver, and Pereg (2003, 82–83) relate this seeking of support from others to the theme of attachment. They suggest that, when we lack the resources for coping with certain situations and associated emotions, the ability to draw on external regulators is contingent on our "attachment history."

5. In developing their account of emotional scaffolding, Colombetti and Krueger (2015) draw on a broader account of the nature and role of scaffolding proposed by Sterelny (2010).

6. Nadeau (1998) provides a detailed account of "family grief," which considers how families operate as units that make sense of events together, how grief is shaped and regulated by family dynamics, and how relationships and patterns of interactions within families are altered by the deaths of family members.

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7. See, for example, Dunahoo et al. (1998) for discussion of gender differences in coping styles, and Mesquita, De Leersnyder, and Albert (2014) for cultural differences.

8. Delegation, although not explicitly recognized as such, is arguably ubiquitous in infancy. As Reeck, Ames, and Ochsner (2016, 48) put it, where one party is lacking in regulatory capacities, "a social regulator can use their executive capacity to implement regulatory strategies on behalf of the target." Thompson (2014, 174) observes that, even in adulthood, our emotions continue to be "managed by others."

9. Bowlby (1980/1998, 232) recognizes that bereavement can involve this distinctive challenge: "Not infrequently after a person has been bereaved the situation with which he has to deal is unique, for the death entails the loss of the very person in whom he has been accustomed to confide. Thus, not only is the death itself an appalling blow but the very person towards whom it is natural to turn in calamity is no longer there. For that reason, if his mourning is to follow a favourable course, it becomes essential that the bereaved be able to turn for comfort elsewhere."

10. One way of conceiving of continuing bonds and their regulatory roles is to further extend attachment theory, so as to include relations with the dead, along with their wider social and cultural contexts (Klass 2006, 854).

11. Higgins (2020, 12) discusses how aesthetic practices can play a similar role to narratives, helping people make sense of "incoherent feelings," reconnect with the social world, and sustain bonds with the deceased.

12. In considering the view that grief can involve two people sharing a token emotion, Krueger discusses an oft-quoted passage from Scheler (1954, 12–13), which describes two parents standing beside the body of their dead child and *feeling the same sorrow*. Krueger notes that Scheler's description is "synchronic" and thus incomplete. In emphasizing the dynamic, changing structure of grief and how it involves mutual regulation, we can further see why the example is lacking. While it is true that people can be said to share grief in various ways, this is not principally a matter of what is experienced at any particular moment. Shared grief involves a temporally extended, heterogeneous process; it is not something that can be captured by a single snapshot.

13. Even if we reject the possibility of a token emotional experience shared by two or more subjects, it could still be maintained that a person's experience of grief is partly *constituted* by its interpersonal and social scaffolding. Brinkmann (2020, 128) thus suggests that grief is not an internal psychological process but a form of *extended emotion*. In other words, the ingredients of grief include certain features of the environment that the grieving person interacts with in a structured, sustained manner. Grief, Brinkmann writes, is "an *extended* psychological process that involves objects and persons in our environment as constituent parts of the emotion." Rather than risk getting caught up in lengthy debates about whether certain forms of scaffolding are partly *constitutive* of grief or just *causally* related to it, I will remain metaphysically neutral here. The point we need to acknowledge is that many of the

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regulatory processes acting upon grief are interpersonal and social in nature, rather than exclusively intrapersonal. What is less clear is whether and how grief itself should be distinguished from everything that shapes its course over time, including processes that are themselves interpersonally and socially distributed.

14. For example, see Scrutton (2018) for a discussion of how rituals can foster shared grief.

15. More recently, Davies (2015) has provided a detailed and wide-ranging study of the cultural settings in which bereavement is experienced, focusing on contemporary Britain.

16. All numbered quotations were obtained via the grief survey, other responses via the pandemic-experience survey. I conducted the latter in collaboration with researchers at the Universities of Okinawa, Bristol, and Birmingham. Anyone over eighteen years of age with relevant life experience was invited to participate. Respondents were instructed to provide free-text answers to a series of questions about various aspects of their experience, with no word limits. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Okinawa. See Carel, Ratcliffe, and Froese (2020) for an introduction to the survey and an account of its rationale. See Froese et al. (2021) for the subsequent data report and access to the full corpus of testimonies.

Chapter 8

1. See Worden (1996) and Dyregov (2008) for wider-ranging discussions of grief in children.

2. See Sweeting and Gilhooly (1990) for a historical review and critical discussion of work on "anticipatory grief." In an interesting extension of the concept, Varga and Gallagher (2020) address what they call anticipatory-vicarious grief, where one feels a sense of loss over how one's own impending death will affect others.

3. Another issue to consider (raised briefly in section 4.4) is whether certain kinds of nonhuman animals experience grief and, if so, whether my account also applies to animal grief. Brinkmann (2020, 2) is doubtful that nonhuman animals can experience grief in anything like the ways we do. As they live in the present, while human grief reflects a temporally extended life structure, it is "only on the surface that other species appear to feel grief." I think he is right to maintain that nonhuman animals cannot experience a disturbance of world, at least not in the elaborate and temporally extended way that humans can. However, this does not preclude simpler forms of habitual dependence on conspecifics or members of other species. Neither does it rule out forms of animal grief that approximate, to some degree, the *personal* aspect of loss. This, I have suggested, is dissociable to some extent from how one's world is disrupted. Given this, it could be that some nonhuman animals form attachments that involve being affected by the distinctive *style* of another organism. So,

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although I limit the scope of my discussion in this book to the full range of human grief experiences, I also acknowledge that the existence and nature of animal grief remains an open issue. King (2013) provides numerous interesting examples and anecdotes that are suggestive of grief in various animal species. However, her admission that humans "grapple" with grief in ways that are "fundamentally different" from other animals leaves open the option of a narrower conception of grief that applies only to the former (King 2013, 147). A further problem with King's discussion is the risk of circularity in maintaining that an animal is capable of love if it is capable of grief and that various behaviors are attributable to grief insofar as they originate in love.

4. However, the proposed diagnostic criteria for pathological grief in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* do include the "bereavement reaction" being "out of proportion to or inconsistent with cultural, religious, or age-appropriate norms" (American Psychiatric Association 2013, 790).

5. For instance, see Ratcliffe (2015, chap. 10) for a discussion of various different criteria that could be employed in order to distinguish pathological depression from healthy forms of experience.

6. Thus, my position is equally compatible with the view that differences between forms of grief ought to be acknowledged without "pathologizing" any of them (Brinkmann 2018).

7. See also Lamb, Pies, and Zisook (2010), who propose eliminating the bereavement exclusion clause but also extending *DSM-IV*'s two-week duration requirement for major depression. For a good retrospective account of the debate, which seeks to represent the diverse viewpoints involved, see Zachar, First, and Kendler (2017).

8. Loss versus retention of self-esteem is also the principal difference emphasized by Freud (1917/2005).

9. In order of appearance, they are "likely to," "tend to," "may be," "generally," "generally," "common," "typically," and "generally."

10. Such differences are also emphasized by Lamb, Pies, and Zisook (2010, 23).

11. Of course, depression experiences can share other symptoms as well, such a lethargy and bodily discomfort. However, for current purposes, a more selective emphasis on isolation, stasis, and loss of possibility suffices.

12. This corresponds to what Lear (2006) calls "radical hope." See Ratcliffe (2015, chap. 4) for a discussion of radical hope in grief and its absence in depression.

13. These testimonies were obtained via a survey conducted as part of the 2009–2012 project "Emotional Experience in Depression: A Philosophical Study," funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council and the German Research Foundation (DFG). For details of the survey, see Ratcliffe (2015, chap. 1).

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14. Loss of access to types of possibilities in depression can take various different forms. One might be unable to experience or contemplate possibilities of a given type in any circumstances (where the type of possibility in question varies in specificity). Alternatively, the inability could be context-sensitive; what seems utterly inaccessible in certain situations continues to be experienced in others. Self-reports can also be challenging to interpret. For instance, someone might remain able to offer very general expressions of hope, seemingly indicating an intact ability to contemplate certain types of possibilities, but be unable to formulate hopes with more specific contents that relate to a life structure, thus suggesting otherwise (Owen et al. 2015; Ratcliffe 2015, 2020b).

15. These testimonies were obtained via a qualitative survey of depression experiences. See note 13 for details.

16. Nussbaum (2001, 82–83) remarks insightfully that "the pathological mourner continues to put the dead person at the very center of her own structure of goals and expectations, and this paralyzes life."

17. See also Horowitz et al. (2003) for a list of proposed diagnostic criteria for complicated grief.

18. The *ICD-11* description of Prolonged Grief Disorder can be found here: https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/1183832314 (last accessed 18 October 2021). For an earlier characterization of "prolonged grief disorder" and a proposal for its inclusion in *DSM-5* and *ICD-11*, see Prigerson et al. (2009).

19. See Prigerson et al. (2021) for an account of the events and activities leading up to the approval of Prolonged Grief Disorder as a new diagnosis for inclusion in *DSM-5-TR*, along with a wider-ranging historical review of changing conceptions of pathological grief.

20. Complementing this, Zisook and Shear (2009) note that typical grief involves a process of transition from one form of experience to another, which they refer to as a movement from "acute" to "integrated" or "abiding" grief.

21. In addition, Neimeyer (e.g., 2005) emphasizes how finding meaning in loss depends on narrative construction. However, it is important not to overstate the role of narrative. Reorientation in grief involves changes in habitual expectations and patterns of significance that are integral to world experience. This need not involve explicit, sense-making narratives.

22. Consistent with this, Boelen, van den Hout, and van den Bout (2006, 115) refer to a form of "anxious avoidance" in complicated grief, which involves maintaining a "strong connection to the deceased" in a way that avoids "confrontation with the reality of the loss."

23. See Ratcliffe, Ruddell, and Smith (2014) for an account of how loss of trust is central to traumatic experience.

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24. However, "difficulty trusting other individuals since the death" does appear among the earlier *DSM-5* criteria for Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, 790).

25. This is consistent with the identification of "yearning/longing" and "preoccupation" as separate criteria in *DSM-5-TR* (Boelen et al., 2020).

26. This is not to suggest that interpersonal relations always make a positive contribution to the course of grief. Certain *kinds* of relationships, with both the living and the dead, can contribute to dysregulation and lack of dynamism. Parkes (2006) provides a detailed discussion of how people's ways of experiencing grief relate to their prior *attachment styles*, emphasizing how different *ways* of relating to others shape our responses to bereavement. The circumstances of the death can also play an important role. For instance, bereavement by suicide is associated with higher reported rates of pathological grief, as well as depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (Young et al. 2012). With an emphasis on how interpersonal processes shape grief, it is clear why this might be the case. For instance, the bereavement may erode one's trust and confidence, in ways that are then exacerbated by responses on the part of others that involve discomfort or stigma. How one makes sense of the loss and relates to the person who has died are also likely to be affected in ways that influence the course of grief (Neimeyer, Baldwin, and Gillies 2006). Due to the particular difficulties associated with bereavement by suicide, it has been suggested that the grief experienced by survivors may be "qualitatively" different from grief in other circumstances (Young et al. 2012).

27. Eisenbruch (1984, 299) notes how refugees' experiences of loss can similarly take these contrasting forms: "some refugees cling fixedly to the culture of the society they have left behind, idealizing the values of the lost culture. Others, in contrast, idealize the host society and hasten to discard the values of their past." Again, this illustrates how "pathological" loss, involving a lack of integration between past and present, can involve experiences of quite different kinds.

28. See also Doka (2002) for various different perspectives on disenfranchised grief.

29. Rinofner-Kreidl (2016) further suggests that even typical or healthy forms of grief involve degrees and kinds of disenfranchisement.

30. The network founder, Jody Day, has provided a detailed discussion of disenfranchisement among those who grieve over involuntary childlessness (Day 2016).

31. Bonanno's position therefore contrasts markedly with that of Bowlby (1980/1998, 8), who remarks on a widespread failure to acknowledge just how "distressing and disabling" the experience of loss is and for how long. According to Bonanno, such views originate in a sampling bias; clinicians and therapists are more likely to encounter people who are experiencing severe forms of grief.

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32. A more specific and plausible target of criticism is the view that explicit "grief work" is generally required in order to adjust to significant bereavements (Bonanno 2009, chap. 2).

33. Bonanno (2009, 75) acknowledges that factors such as level of education, financial situation, and other causes of stress are all important. However, he also suggests that genetic differences may have a role to play.

Chapter 9

1. See Ratcliffe (2015, chap. 1) for further discussion of Husserl's conception of the phenomenological reduction.

2. One way of putting this would be to say that both grief and phenomenological enquiry involve engaging with what Karl Jaspers (1969) calls "limit situations." See George (2017) for a discussion of grief as a limit situation, which focuses more specifically on memory in grief.

3. Heidegger, in his 1929–1930 lecture course, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, draws a complementary distinction between genuine philosophizing and practices of exchanging propositions that remain embedded in conventional language: "A dialogue that is a philosophizing is rarely or never at all attained among those who busy themselves with philosophy, yet do not philosophize. So long as this elementary readiness for the intrinsic perilousness of philosophy is lacking, a confrontation that is a philosophizing will never occur, no matter how many articles are launched against one another in journals" (Heidegger 1995, 20). However, I would not want to endorse a simple opposition between authentic and institutionalized modes of philosophical inquiry. Philosophical thought has many different roles to play and spans many different techniques. What I am concerned with here is one conception of one kind of philosophy.

4. Similar remarks can be found in *The Prose of the World* and some of the essays collected in *Sense and Non-Sense*.

5. Carel (2016) proposes that experiences of illness can play a comparable role.

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